Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án

Dr Hushidar Motlagh

بهاءالله در قرآن (*Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án*)
tr. from Persian by Shahlá Evans

Bahá'u'lláh
in the Qur'án

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Shahla Evans

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the two Promised Ones of all religions Who, in the Qur'án, have been referred to as "the Remembrance of God" and "the Great Announcement"— the two Promised Ones Who have been manifested to spread the knowledge and love of God; to establish the foundation of justice, unity and peace among the people of the world.

Selected quotes

Give the glad tidings to those servants who hear the words and choose the best of them. God guideth such people, and they are possessed of an understanding heart. Qur'án 39:17–18

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The first utterance of God is this: With breasts sanctified from earthly desires and defilements, and hearts purified from every color in creation, approach the All-Knowing, All-Seeing, Almighty One. Bring forth that which beseemeth His Day. This is the Day of beholding His face; the Lord hath appeared unveiled and manifest. Hasten with pure hearts! Perchance ye may attain and discover that which befitteth your station.

With the waters of righteousness cleanse yourselves from covetousness and unseemly conduct that ye may discover the secret of the Day of the All-Sufficing God .... Three things leadeth you unto His Presence, and revealeth your salvation: Purity of heart and sight, and sanctity of your hearing from all that it hath heard.

Say: O friends! Your guide hath come! His words are evident among all other words; His way is manifest among all other paths. His is the right Path. Approach and hear His words. The clouds of Divine bounty are raining down, and the Day Star of His Knowledge is radiant, leading you to His Path. The man of courage is he who abandoneth the paths of vain imaginings, and chooseth the Path of God.

O friends! The Hand of the Almighty God hath rent asunder the veils of idle fancy that your eyes may see and your ears be not deprived of hearing. This is the Day of hearing. Hearken to the words of the Incomparable Friend, and act as beseemeth His Day.[1]

O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which, in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime, are being showered upon you. The Day Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire.

Say: O people! The Lamp of God is burning; take heed, lest the fierce winds of your disobedience extinguish its light. Now is the time to arise and magnify the Lord, your God. Strive not after bodily comforts, and keep your heart pure and stainless. The Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the one true God, deliver yourselves from the darkness that surroundeth you. Center your thoughts in the Well-Beloved, rather than in your own selves.[2]

What is the purpose of religion?

O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension.[3]

Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord.[4]

O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.[5]

O friends! .... Treat all people with utmost love.[6]

We summon all people in this day to love and unity, to fellowship and loving kindness.[7]

O people of Persia! In former times ye have been the symbols of mercy and the embodiments of affection and kindliness. The regions of the world were illumined and embellished by the brightness of the light of your knowledge and by the blaze of your erudition. How is it that you have arisen to destroy yourselves and your friends with your own hands? .... Gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.[8]

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that religion must be in conformity with science and reason. If belief and teaching are opposed to the analysis of reason and principles of science, they are not worthy of acceptance. This principle has not been revealed in any of the former Books of divine teaching.

Another fundamental announcement made by Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must be the source of unity and fellowship in the world. If it is productive of enmity, hatred and bigotry, the absence of religion would be preferable. This is a new principle of revelation found only in the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh.

Again, Bahá'u'lláh declares that all forms of prejudice among mankind must be abandoned and that until existing prejudices are entirely removed, the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure. This principle cannot be found in any other sacred volume than the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.[9]

1 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 274–276.
2 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 167–168.
3 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 220.
4 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 222.
5 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 164.
6 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 53. (prov. tr.)
7 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 36. (prov. tr.)
8 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84.
9 *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 434.

A dream

One night, while I was writing this book, I had this profound dream:

A column of writing appeared in front of my eyes; the script appeared embossed, written as though in characters of brilliant light. I could see the words clearly, but could not understand them; I was thinking they were verses of the Qur'án; just like the verses of the Qur'án, they were difficult to understand.

As I was looking at the words, I became aware that, from the midst of the words, someone was watching me; this being had a spiritual connection with me; his presence was clearly perceptible; but I could not in any way see his face; I felt that he was beyond human existence; he had a great affection for me, and wanted to tell me something.

With inner tongue I asked him "Why is this script so difficult to understand?" He answered "Do you think you can understand these words?" I thought he was teasing me and telling me "How is it that you have such a great expectation?"

The connection between this spiritual being and me was as a loving and caring father with his son; I was filled with joy as I awakened.

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Introduction

This book is a gift to the lovers of truth, those who believe the Qur'án to be the Word of God, and clearly recognize the Divine Knowledge and Wisdom manifested throughout this heavenly Book. Muslims will have to be willing to take a few steps out of the confines of ancestral beliefs, to hear with their own ears, see with their own eyes; and with their own minds ponder and weigh the new Faith of God.

> *The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; .... By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others ....*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

In recognizing truth, the Word of God should be a guide for all people, especially faithful Muslims:

> Then announce the Good News to My servants, those who listen to the Word and follow the best of it; those whom God hath guided and are endued with understanding. Qur'án 39:17–18

The purpose of this book is to inform; its purpose is not to change your beliefs; only God can transform hearts.

> The one whom God guideth, is guided. Qur'án 7:178

> Even if We sent to them angels and the dead spoke to them ... they still will not believe, unless it is God's Will. But most of them are inclined to ignorance. Qur'án 6:111

This book, which has taken half a century to write, provides you with the details of the "Greatest News" in human history, and prepares you for an astonishing and joyful journey to a new Land. *Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án* is divided into eleven parts, or as the mystics may say, eleven valleys. Passing through each valley, your confidence in the necessity and importance of the journey increases. To reach the Promised City, you must journey through each valley with patience, often pausing to reflect.

> *... without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

I pray to the kind Lord that this book will be acceptable in your sight, and ultimately, lead you to a fountain of understanding and assurance.

> *Two things are more pleasant and attractive than all others; a heart that is receptive and words that are pleasing.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no.2.
2 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 5.
3 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 84.

Part 1
The Greatest Puzzle hidden in the Qur'án

This part contains two chapters:

1. **The Greatest News in human history**
2. **How can we recognize the Messengers of God?**

It is not prudent to begin a journey without preparation. The purpose of Part 1 is to prepare you for the journey through the remaining ten valleys.

> *... one must make ready the receptacle and become worthy of the descent of heavenly bestowals*[1]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

1 The Call of the Divine Beloved, *The Four Valleys 2018*, p. 91

1
The Greatest News in human history

O my Lord, increase my knowledge. Qur'án 20:114

Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án discusses the claims of two Promised Ones that all the heavenly Books have announced their appearance. These two great Messengers, according to God's promise, appeared in Iran, and gave the people of the world the joyful news of the fulfillment of God's promise:

> *Say: O My servants! The Guide is come. Hasten unto Him. The Peerless Seer hath arrived, showing the straight Path. It beseemeth him who hearkeneth to say, with his inner tongue: O my Lord! Thy Call hath revived the world and hath bestowed life upon it. My face is turning to Thee and my soul is eager to meet Thee .... The Lord of the world is come; His Way is unlike other ways, and His Words unlike other words. Hearken and come forth. This blessed Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer. This is the Word of God.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence? These are the appointed days which ye have been yearningly awaiting in the past—the days of the advent of divine justice. Render ye thanks unto God, O ye concourse of believers.*[2] The Báb

The Báb ("the Gate", founder of the Bábí Faith) claimed to be the Promised Qá'im ("the One Who rises"), and prepared people for the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God"), the Promised One of all heavenly Books. Although the Bahá'í Faith is primarily founded on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, both Messengers (Manifestations of God) may be considered founders of the Faith.

> *Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.*[3] The Báb

> *This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

This book lifts the veil (of concealment) from the greatest "Puzzle in the Qur'án", and with the help of hundreds of verses reveals the mystery hidden for over a thousand years in this heavenly Charter. Only by examining all these verses and clues, and their interconnectedness, is it possible to truly solve this perplexing puzzle. If, before reading the entire book, you find anything objectionable in it and, as a result, decide not to continue, you will not reach the

goal of your search; because patience and perseverance are necessary to solve any riddle.

The Holy Qur'án refers to the Bahá'í Faith as the "**Momentous Announcement**" or the "**Greatest News**", and has dedicated hundreds of verses to it. Would it not be a tragic loss to remain deaf to this Message and unaware of the astonishing solution to its conundrum?

The Great Announcement

> The greatest [attainment] is the good pleasure of God; that is the supreme salvation. Qur'án 9:72

This book is concerned with describing and solving the "Greatest Puzzle in the Qur'án". The mystery has been divulged through the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. Within this puzzle is hidden the glad-tidings of "**the Greatest Announcement**" for all humanity.

God has made "a Promise" throughout the Qur'án to the people of the world. Such an exalted rank and honor has been bestowed on this "Promise" that it has been referred to as ***an-Naba' al-'Aẓím*** ("**the Great Announcement**" or "**the Great News**"). However, prophecies in the Qur'án state that at the time of the fulfillment of "**the Great Announcement**", the majority of the people of the world will be plunged into such depths of negligence that they will remain unaware of its appearance.

> Say: He is the Great News from whom you turn away. Qur'án 38:67–68

> *Say: By God! This is that Great Announcement with which the Books of God, the All-Knowing, the All-informed, are adorned.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Verily, the Most Great Announcement hath come; yet the people, for the most part, are heedless.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

You are invited to investigate the Bahá'í Faith so that you may become aware of the mystery of the "Greatest News" and the fulfillment of the heavenly glad-tidings in the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. The spiritual and social destiny of humanity is closely connected to the recognition and understanding of this enigmatic glad-tidings and announcement. It had been the Will of God that until the new Faith was manifested, the mystery of this joyous message remained hidden. The Bahá'í Revelation has suddenly removed the veil from this great mystery and made its meaning manifest.

The evidences of the truth of the Messengers of God

What are the proofs of the truth of the Messengers of God and their religions? Within the scriptures of former religions, God has always provided signs and evidences regarding the reality of His future Messengers. A great portion of the Qur'án and the holy Books of the Jewish and Christian Faiths are dedicated to the mention of these signs and evidences. According to God's testimony, those signs and evidences are sufficient for the recognition of the Messengers and acceptance of Their religions.

> They say: Why does He not bring us a sign [miracle] from His Lord? Has not clear proof been given them [regarding the truth of the Messenger] in the former books of Revelation? Qur'án 20:133

People's question: Why does He not bring us a miracle from His God?

God's response: Did they not receive clear proofs in former heavenly Books?

> *Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

> *For whatsoever hath come to pass, hath been prophesied by them who are the Mines of divine knowledge, and Recipients of God's eternal law.*[9] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Whatever hath come to pass in this Day hath been foretold in the Scriptures of old.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

None of the previous Messengers of God (Manifestations) have appeared with so many proofs in support of their claims as have the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. These proofs are both hidden and manifest in all the heavenly Books of the past. ***Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án*** contains only a small number of these signs and proofs. The Qur'án even provides a detailed account of the historical events of the Bahá'í Faith.

> All things We have explained in detail. Qur'án 17:12

> ... from Him is not hidden even a small particle, or larger or smaller—in the heavens or on earth, that is not [recorded] in the conspicuous Book. Qur'án 34:3

The glad-tidings of the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our time have been repeated in the Qur'an and the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures more than a thousand times. Some of these prophecies are expressed in mystery and symbolism; others are so clear and explicit that they leave no room for doubt or hesitation.

The fulfillment of such a large body of prophecy could only have been made possible by the Hand of the Almighty. We, His pitiful creatures, are not even aware of what will occur in the next few minutes. How much less possible would it have been for humans to have any foreknowledge regarding the appearance in Iran, more than one thousand years after Islam, of a religion that would overcome the countless obstacles of its encounter with the Qajar dynasty's powerful and tyrannical kings![*]

Rest assured that the knowledge of the prophecies of the Qur'an and their fulfillment, after the lapse of centuries, in the appearance of this new religion in Iran, will greatly strengthen your faith. Those who have become aware of the

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[*] The eleventh Imám, Ḥasan-i-Askarí, died in AH 260. In AH 1260 (CE 1844), the Báb proclaimed Himself to be the expected Qá'im. The date of the manifestation of the Báb was prophesied many times in the Qur'án.

Way of God and His Plan for the advancement of humanity will testify that this knowledge and insight has once again caused the light of faith and hope to shine in their hearts, and has propelled them to the arena of service to humanity. This faith has caused them to strive, ever more decisively, to free the world from the chains of superstition and prejudice.

The remedy for all the ills of humanity is to carry forward the Plan of God and enlighten the hearts with the Light of God. May we all fulfill our part in this great enterprise!

Symbolic language—a divine veil of concealment

We shall see that many Qur'anic verses confirm the concealment of the plan of God regarding the appearance of the Promised One. God, in His Wisdom, has hidden the prophecies of the manifestation of the Messengers in symbolic language. This is a veil of such opacity that, even if all the religious authorities and the mystics were to combine to assist one another, they would never be able to unlock the "**Great Mystery**" without God's leave. That is why God likened the Return of Christ to the "**coming of a thief**" (Revelation 3:3).

Hence, it should not be surprising that the majority of the Muslim clergy have been unaware of the Promise, the Announcement and all the related mysteries hidden within the Qur'an. According to God's testimony, people must not become aware of the future Plan of God before its destined time. Knowledge of the Plan of God will cause the hypocrites who occupy powerful positions to do all they can to alter the Plan, and prevent it from proving to be true.

The seekers of truth are now invited to investigate the Message hidden behind the veil of symbolic language of the Qur'an. If they search with freedom of thought and fairmindedness, they will be able to witness with their inner eyes the grandeur and splendor of the "**Great mystery**" revealed in the sacred Writings of the Baha'i Faith.

Please read, carefully, the Qur'anic verses gathered in this book so that you may unravel the mystery for yourself.

The meaning of the "Seal of the Prophets"

A misunderstanding has developed among the majority of Muslims that Islam brings finality to revelation; and that, from now until eternity, humanity will no longer be honored with the presence of another Messenger of God. Through the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of only one word, khatam ("seal"), the promoters of this belief have succeeded in raising a mighty fortress and building an impenetrable barrier against reality.

The first three parts of this book will remove the barrier and demonstrate to you that the holy Qur'an, emphatically and repeatedly, instills in us the hope that the bond between the Creator and His creation will never be broken, and that God's *Sunnah* ("practice, tradition") of sending Messengers (Manifestations) will never end. The appearance of the Baha'i Faith is yet another step in that direction, a sign of the truth of this *Sunnah*.

> Such has been the Way of God in the past. Never shall there be any change in God's Way [Sunnah]. Qur'án 48:23

The former Messengers (Manifestations)—each being part of a chain of the eternally recurring appearance of God's Representatives on Earth—is a proof of this unchangeable Divine tradition. During the billions of years that the earth will circle around the sun, the inhabitants of this planet will witness the appearance of innumerable Messengers. In the past ages, about every one thousand years, God has sent a Messenger to humankind. Scientists estimate that the sun will survive for several billions of years. Therefore, if God continues to send a Messenger every one thousand years, millions of Messengers will appear.

The appearance of Messengers is a sign of God's Grace and Bounty. How could this Grace and Bounty suddenly be withdrawn and this communication between the Creator and His creation cease? Is it possible that our Creator no longer has any further guidance or Words for His servants?

We will discuss this topic in great detail in Part 2.

Days of greatest distress in human history

The former Messengers have prophesied the trials that this Age must suffer due to man's rejection of the Promised One.

> ... these will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom He has chosen, He has shortened them. The Gospel of Mark 13:19–20

> *The world is encircled with calamities .... And yet no one on earth hath perceived its origin.*[11] Bahá'u'lláh

> We do not visit the people with Our chastisement unless We send a Messenger. Qur'án 17:15

> We did not send a prophet to any city, unless We gripped its people with affliction and adversity. Qur'án 7:94

The following is Bahá'u'lláh's message to Iranians:

> *O people of Persia! In former times ye have been the symbols of mercy and the embodiments of affection and kindliness. The regions of the world were illumined and embellished by the brightness of the light of your knowledge and by the blaze of your erudition. How is it that you have arisen to destroy yourselves and your friends with your own hands?*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

Even though Iran is presently immersed in trials and afflictions—its future is immeasurably glorious.

> *Iran ... will make such progress that the eyes of the great and the wise ones will be amazed.*[13] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

An age of spreading irreligion

Bahá'u'lláh has prophesied that in our age the "face of the world" will turn to irreligion. This process has, since His time, gradually intensified, and in recent years its speed and intensity has tremendously increased.

> *The world is in travail, and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief.*[14] Bahá'u'lláh

Christ made a similar prophecy:

> At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. Matthew 24:10

It is regrettable that the misuse of religion in our time has caused millions of Muslims to reject their faith and become pessimistic about religion; they have even doubted the existence of God and of the life after. The tendency to quarrel with Islám and escape from Islám by many Muslims, especially Iranians, has increased. Such a prevalence of pessimism against God and religion among so many people in such a short time is unprecedented.

It is illogical for believers to have doubts about religion because of the actions of some who, nowadays, falsely claim to be religious. Even as the holy Qur'án was being revealed, God predicted the deplorable condition of the Muslims in our era, with the following warning:

> "O My Lord! My people [Muslims] have turned away from this Qur'án. Qur'án 25:30

Imám 'Alí* confirmed and emphasized the prophecies of the Qur'án:

> The earth shall quake violently under the weight of bloodshed and war. There will be an abundance of evil doers and scarcity of the righteous ones. The pure fountain of truth shall be dried, and the river of falsehood and meanness shall overflow its banks. People will be pretentious in tongue, and in heart hold each other in enmity. And in the end, shall cloak Islám with an ugly inverted cloak.[15] Imám 'Alí

> O People! A time will soon come when the Chalice of the Water of eternal life, i.e. Islám shall be overturned and naught will remain of it.[16] Imám 'Alí

Ours is an age of decline of religion and of belief everywhere. Other holy Books have also prophesied the spiritual decayof the people of our time:

> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.† Matthew 24:37–38

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* 'Alí ibn Abí Ṭálib (13 September 601–29 January 661) was a cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad, who ruled as the fourth caliph from 656 to 661.

† Other references: I Corinthians 2:6-8, Timothy 3:1-9 & 4:4

Jesus raised the subject of the corruption of religion and the believers of our time:*

> ... When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8

Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án shows us that the compassionate God has prepared the healing Medicine in advance. At the same time that He was inviting the people of Arabia to faithfulness and knowledge through the tongue of the Prophet, He was also looking out for the future needs of mankind. This He did through hundreds of verses in the Qur'án, providing whatever signs and proofs we needed to recognize the Promised One of our time. Our Creator assures us that He never forgets His servants or leaves them without guidance.

Role of religious leaders in the decline of faith

God has given us advance knowledge of the deplorable spiritual condition of today's leaders of religion. In our age, those who are supposed to engage in the education and guidance of the masses are busy with sedition and strife. The following ḥadíth attributed to Muḥammad has been recorded in a number of sources. A portion of it has also been quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*:

> *A time will come when naught will remain of the Qur'án save its text, and of Islám nothing but its name. People will be called Muslims whereas they are far remote from Islám. Their Mosques will be flourishing but will be desolate. The divines of that age will be the wickedest leaders on earth.* ***They will be engaged in sedition which will return to themselves.***† [17] Bahá'u'lláh

In Iran, the land of the birth of the Bahá'í Faith, this prophecy of the Prophet of God has proven true in the most accurate way. At the instigation of the religious leaders of the time, and with their support, over 20,000 followers of the new Faith, including infants, women and old men, were killed in the most cruel and tragic way.

> *Behold the divines of the Shí'ih sect, who considered themselves more exalted, more glorious, and more perfect than all others ... They saw themselves as the greatest of all people, while in the sight of God were the meanest.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

> *They do whatsoever they do in the name of Islám .... In their own estimation, they tread the path of utmost prudence and judgement.*[19] The Báb

> *No two are found to agree on one and the same law, for they seek no God but their own desire, and tread no path but the path of error. In leadership they have recognized the ultimate object of their endeavor, and account pride and haughtiness as the highest attainments of their heart's desire. They have placed their sordid machinations above the divine decree, have renounced resignation unto the will of God, busied themselves with selfish calculation, and walked in the way of the hypocrite. With all their power and strength they strive to secure themselves in*

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* Jewish and Christian scriptures include over one thousand prophecies to the manifestation of the two Promised Onesof our age. These prophecies and signs are included in three volumes of over 1,500 pages by this author: *I Shall Come Again, Lord of Lords,* and *King of Kings.*

† Bahá'u'lláh relates a part of this ḥadíth in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 247–248.

their petty pursuits, fearful lest the least discredit undermine their authority or blemish the display of their magnificence.[20] Bahá'u'lláh

The divines of every age rose up in opposition, and weak souls, following their lead, ignored proofs and reason.[21] Bahá'u'lláh

Were worldly knowledge sufficient, the leaders of Christianity would have been believers today ....[22] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb addressed the religious authorities in this way:

Be not proud of your knowledge, your judgement, or your deeds. They profit you only if you believe in God and His verses and attain certitude in this Faith.[23] The Báb

The majority of those who oppose Him (the Promised One) are the divines.[24] Bahá'u'lláh

Whenever God's Messengers appear in the world of being, a number of people, in particular the religious leaders, falsely imagine that they can prevent the Sun from rising or shining; little do they know that their enmity, like the spring rain, will only cause the seeds of love and faith to grow in the hearts of the believers and increase the growth of God's Faith.

Every word uttered by the enemies (of the Faith), will itself proclaim this Most Great Announcement and guide all unto this straight Path.[25] Bahá'u'lláh

At the time of the appearance of this Faith, not only the religious leaders arose in opposition and enmity, the temporal rulers also assisted and co-operated with them. The following is a translation of a historic letter in the hand-writing of Náṣir-i-Dín Sháh, to his uncle, the commander of his army, Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá. The letter shows how religious leaders of the time with the collusion of a despotic and blood-thirsty king were resolved to eradicate the young tree of God's Faith:

"O my illustrious uncle! I want you to destroy this misled and misguided sect in such wise that no trace of it remains, and is utterly annihilated and vanished from the face of the earth."[26]

The Bahá'í Faith has now spread to over 200 countries and independent territories—and according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*—it is the second most widespread Faith (after Christianity) in terms of geographic reach.

In every age, when the light of Truth dawned, the leaders of religion arose in denial and resisted the light of Truth; moreover,, they spilt the blood of the innocent and at last rose up against each other ... except those who, like candles, were illumined by the light of Truth and entered the shadow of the tree of hope.[27] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Many times, in the Qur'án there is a discussion of how those in Hell accuse each other. The sheep-like followers accuse their leaders of being responsible for misleading them. In response the leaders say "You were not forced to follow us". At the end of the conversation, the followers ask God to double the punishment of their leaders.*

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* Refer to Qur'án 41:29, 37:27-32, 34:31-33, 33:66-68.

Terrible is the state of ... the seditious and the tyrants. Although to the people they may appear honorable and wealthy, they will soon be overtaken by sudden abasement and infinite wrath.[28] Bahá'u'lláh

Religious leaders of whatever creed, and those who idly follow them, should be warned by these prophecies, and know that to be self-satisfied is not a proof of being right; because the inability to see one's own faults, and considering oneself better than others is a clear characteristic of being human.

Each group rejoices in (is happy with) what it has. Qur'án 30:32

Deceive not your own selves that you are being virtuous for the sake of God when you are not.[29] The Báb

Over the previous 150 years, hundreds of the greatest Muslim divines, whether in Iran or in other countries, have accepted the Bahá'í Faith. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslims are not aware of this truth and do not know that:

- Many of the greatest Muslim divines and clergymen were so certain of the truth of this Faith that, despite facing danger, they expressed their belief with the utmost courage. Some, entirely of their own free will, made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives for the sake of their convictions.
- Yet, another group of Muslim divines and clergymen were so convinced of the error of judgement of their fellow clergymen that, without hesitation, they issued a sentence of death for the former group.

According to the dictates of wisdom and reason, and based on God's clear commandment, it is not permissible to blindly follow another. Nevertheless, we should ask these followers and imitators "Which of the two groups of clergymen are trustworthy? Those who sacrificed their lives for the love of God, or those who sitting on the throne of ease and honor, issuing death verdicts for the lovers of God?" If it were lawful to imitate, which of the two groups of clergymen are worthy of emulation? Those who seek power and wealth, or those who thirst after truth, and with perfect humility sacrifice their all for the Beloved?

Is it not a sign [of its heavenly Source] that the learned of the children of Israel have recognized it [the Qur'án]? Qur'án 26:197

Freedom of belief and conscience is one of God's greatest gifts to humankind. This gift places a great responsibility on our shoulders. Parroting the religion of our forefathers or following religious leaders is not consistent with freedom of conscience. The first steps toward salvation and freedom from the trap of past prejudices and vain imaginings are investigation, acquisition of knowledge, prayer, and reliance on the origin of creation and existence.

Will a loving Creator suddenly forget His servants who need guidance? Will He neglect the Faith that, according to the prophecy of the faithful Imám 'Alí, the malicious and the hypocrites will cover with a "misfit inverted cloak"? Will an All-Wise, All-Knowing God leave His hapless servants, in the clutches of the

cruel, drowned in grief and sorrow without guidance? Is such a behavior worthy of a just God?

If you are among those believers who have lost their faith in God, in the afterlife and in religion; and who have fully attached themselves to this material world because of the unwholesome behavior of the people of religion, these words are addressed to you. Even if only for the love of knowledge, accept the invitation of the Promised One Who has appeared in this world of being and endured countless misfortunes solely for the sake of your happiness and prosperity. Consider His heavenly Words and the proofs of His Manifestation. Uncover the mysteries that our Creator has clothed with precision and skill in the garb of allusion, symbolism and allegory throughout the Qur'án—this unique and peerless Book. See how these mysteries have been brought to light in the language of His Promised One of this Age. Perchance the beauty and magnificence of this astonishing and "**Great Puzzle**" may revive your lost faith and once again kindle the light of hope and the love of God in your hearts.

> *O servants! Walk ye not without one to guide you on the way, and accept ye not the words of every guide. How numerous the guides who have gone astray and failed to discover the straight Path! He alone is a guide who is free from the bondage of this world and whom nothing whatsoever can deter from speaking the truth.*[30]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

How beautiful is this poem that was composed by the courageous and sweet-tongued poet, Ṭáhirih!*:

> Look up! Our dawning day draws its first breath!
> The world grows light! Our souls begin to glow
>
> No ranting shaykh rules from his pulpit
> No mosque hawks holiness it does not know
>
> No sham, no pious fraud, no priest commands!
> The turban's knot cut to its root below!
>
> No more conjurations! No spells! No ghosts!
> Good riddance! We are done with folly's show!
>
> The search for Truth shall drive out ignorance
> Equality shall strike the despots low
>
> Let warring ways be banished from the world
> Let justice everywhere its carpet throw
>
> May Friendship ancient hatreds reconcile
> May love grow from the seed of love we sow![31]

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* Fáṭimih umm-Salámih (1817-18–1852), known as Ṭáhirih ("The pure one"), Qurratu'l-'Ayn ("Solace of the Eyes"), Zarrín-Táj ("Crown of Gold") and Zakiyyih ("Virtuous"). She is remembered for her skill as a poet, her theological insights, her leadership as one of the earliest Bábís, and her ability to organize and inspire women to reject their oppressed status.

Ask those who know, not the wicked

At no other time have the people of the world been as perplexed and distressed as they are in this age. On the one hand, preoccupation with the affairs of this world has dominated the spirit of people and left no time for study and investigation. One the other hand, the number of those who claim to know the right path has greatly increased. The shout "The only way to salvation is my religion" is raised high on every side. In the midst of such tumult, how can one find one's way to the fountainhead of trust and assurance and hear and recognize the Word of God? Many are those who are thirsty and eager for truth but do not know from whom to seek it or how to reach the fountainhead of truth. In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh explains that at the setting of the "Day-star of Truth":

> *... mankind will become afflicted with "oppression" and hardship, knowing not whither to turn for guidance.*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

This "oppression" is a sign that the people are in need of the rising and shining of the "Sun".

God teaches us to be fair in our judgement, and not to accept the view of every ignorant person as the standard of truth. Whatever most Iranians know about the Bahá'í Faith has been heard from those who are ignorant or who are enemies of the Faith. Without proof or reason, they accept statements of such people as the truth. The following Qur'anic verse warns people against committing such a great error:

> O ye who believe! If a corrupt [wicked] person comes to you with any news, investigate that news [ask for proof], lest you unknowingly harm a people, and then regret what you have done. Qur'án 49:6

Notice to what extent the glorious Qur'án foresees the ways and habits of the people of our time. Many centuries ago, it informed and warned us about the claims of "wicked and ignorant people". Instead of asking the ignorant and prejudiced, God wants us to ask those who know about the "Great News":

> Ask those who are truly informed of Him. Qur'án 25:59

Now you have a chance to hear about this Joyous News and this Great Announcement from those who know and can tell you about it, with proofs based on hundreds of signs and verses.

> *Suffer not the words of the foe to hold thee back from the Friend or the insinuations of the enemy to cause thee to forsake the Beloved.*[33] Bahá'u'lláh

The start of a reviving spring after a long and sorrowful winter

What we witness in this age concerning religion and religious people should not surprise us. **The fulfillment of God's prophecy concerning the curruption of the religious leaders and their followers in our time should strengthen our faith, not weaken it.** If the prophecies had not been fulfilled, we would have been overwhelmed by doubts and misgivings, and have forsaken our faith. Bahá'u'lláh explains that the people's denial and persecution of the

Promised Qa'im (the Bab) is a proof of His truth, since whatever has occurred and is happening is according to the prophecies of the former Prophets.[34]

We must be warned by what has occurred because, from the beginning of creation, God's Plan has been and will continue to be such that, after the Spring and Summer, we must expect the Fall and then Winter, then again, another Spring. This has been and will continue to be the fate of all religions; there is no exception to this sequence of events. The calamities of our age are signs of the spread of a hard and dreadful Winter, and the appearance of the Baha'i Faith is the vanguard of a new Spring, to be followed by the rising and shining of the life giving Sun.

The vicissitudes of time continue. After the cold winter, the beauty and warmth of spring emerges once again to bestow new life to the world.

> No change will ever be found in God's way [tradition]. Qur'án 33:62 & 48::23

> *Say: If the autumn winds strip the trees of the beauty of spring, this is for no other reason than the appearance of further adornments. Thus hath it been decreed by the God of power and strength.*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

> *At a time when darkness had encompassed the world, the ocean of divine favour surged and His Light was made manifest.*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

> *It is clear that the rising of the Sun followeth the darkness of night ... If His Holiness, Sháh-Bahrám (the Zoroastrian Promised One) doth not appear at such a dark time of crisis, in what age should He shine?*[37] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

> *Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples.*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

Our age is like the winter of religion where the setting of the sun of love and faith has occurred in the hearts of most of the followers of religion. However, according to the Promise of God, this winter will end, and this chaos will ultimately lead to order. Our work now is one of sowing and planting for the spring. God provides the seed; we do the planting. The purpose of this book is the same: the sowing and planting of the seeds of faith, and of the love of God in the hearts of the seekers who still cling to hope. It is our choice, and our fate is in our hands, whether the seeds grow and bring forth the fruit of hope and faith, or the storms of life scatter and erase them from memory. According to God's Will, belief and faith are not to be forced on anyone. **"There is no compulsion in religion"** (Qur'án 2:256) is an eloquent testimony to these words.

At the same time as God was revealing the Qur'án and informing us of a time when Muslims would be far removed from faith and religion, He also taught us the Way to salvation. The Way was the appearance of a new Messenger Who would revive the spirit of faith in people, making them hopeful of the favor and blessings of God, and freeing them from sadness and anxiety.

As you will see in this book, when the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án is decoded, it provides crucial information for our era. God not only repeats, several times, the year of the manifestation of His Promised One but He also includes the time

of the victory and expansion of His Faith. This will be a time when the signs of God's Power and Beauty become so manifest that no one will be able to deny the coming of Spring or the season of gathering the wholesome fruits of summer.

The emergence of the Bahá'í Faith is the greatest event in the history of humanity. According to God's Will, this is the age when the people of the world must associate with one another as milk and honey, in the shadow of the Faith of God, to build a new world. We can choose to use our quickly passing earthly lifespan to sow the seeds of faith in our hearts and in the hearts of others, and to reap the gift of the everlasting fruits of life. Alternatively, we can continue to spend our life in pursuit of comfort and material riches. Either way, at the destined time, the season of Summer will appear and the Garden of God will bear the promised fruits. Those who choose not to play a part in this **Great Event**, and not to arise in this Resurrection to make an effort, will only deprive themselves of heavenly grace and everlasting bounty. God is not and will never be in need of His servants.

According to God's promise in the Qur'án, the season of Spring appeared with the Manifestation of the Báb, and a new era in human history began. One thousand years after the conclusion of the period of Revelation and inspiration in Islám, the Promised One began to invite people to the Word of God. However, the "worshippers of Winter" did not care for the beauty and purity of the Spring. They avoided the Light of God and hid themselves behind the dark clouds of tradition and superstition. Instead of joy, thankfulness, and praise for the loving God, and the acceptance of His infinite favor and bounty, they became fearful and alarmed. They mocked the Promised One and did not relent in their enmity and rancor until at last they made Him the target of hundreds of bullets. Therefore, we should not be surprised by what we see happening; if the ailing refuse the healing medicine and are overtaken by trials and calamity, who is at fault?

> *As a penalty for their doings, the people are found to be in grievous loss and travail .... Meditate on the world's upheavals. By God! They will not subside but will increase day by day. Thus informeth you the All-Informed.*[39] Bahá'u'lláh

Those who do not have time to investigate

> Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Take heed, O ye who are endued with understanding. Qur'án 39:9

> But there is no escape from learning
> Who can say that the learned and the ignorant are equal?
> Abu'l-Qásim Firdawsí Ṭúsí

Many readers, looking at this large volume, might say "My life is hectic and chaotic. How can I find the time to study such a book?" If such a thought crosses your mind, say this in response to yourself:

- I can finish this book in a year by reading only two chapters a month.
- Every month contains 720 hours. Is spending two or three of those hours, i.e. 0.5% of this time, for the sake of my eternal destiny—as unimagineable

as thousands of billions of years—really difficult or contrary to reason and wisdom?

The reason for being born in this material world is to allow for our ethical and spiritual progress and development. Such progress is possible only through a close and loving relationship with our Creator, which can only be achieved through His Messenger for our era.. Thus, the purpose of the appearance of the Messengers is also for our spiritual progress. As all heavenly scriptures have testified, if we do not achieve our goal, then we have wasted our precious lives. Jesus Christ addressed the people of our time in these words:

> But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these (other) things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

The Bahá'í Faith is **God's Kingdom** for the people of our time. Compared to this **Kingdom**, the glory and riches of this world have no worth. If you receive this gift, according to God's promise, all your needs are also fulfilled.

God desires our happiness and prosperity. However, the first step in achieving this unique and peerless bounty is the recognition of God's Apostle Who is the Mirror of God's majesty and greatness, and the "Dawning Place of Revelation".

> *The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.*[40] Bahá'u'lláh

Therefore, to achieve this great goal—the first duty that God has made incumbent upon His servants—we must be patient and diligent. God has provided a clear reward for every praiseworthy and charitable act, but the reward of patience is boundless.

> Surely God will bestow immeasurable reward upon those who patiently persevere. Qur'án 39:10

> *... without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal.*[41] Bahá'u'lláh

> *One must judge of search by the standard of the Majnún of Love. It is related that one day they came upon Majnún sifting the dust, and his tears flowing down. They said, "What doest thou?" He said, "I seek for Laylí." They cried, "Alas for thee! Laylí is of pure spirit, and thou seekest her in the dust!" He said, "I seek her everywhere; haply somewhere I shall find her."*[42] Bahá'u'lláh

The prerequisite for achieving any desire is striving and searching. Could there be an exception for gaining the knowledge of **the Greatest News in Human History**? Only those who seek diligently will reach the object of their desire.

> Those who strive for Our sake, will be guided to Our Path. Qur'án 29:69

This book is a gift to the lovers of knowledge and understanding—those who walk not save in the way of righteousness and wisdom, those who consider faith in God and His love superior to all other things.

Clear proofs have come to you from your God. Whoever will open his eyes (to see) will do so for his own sake, and whoever is inclined to blindness will be to his own loss. Qur'án 6:104

We shall know God by His Words

Say! Be hopeful in the grace and mercy of God, and rejoice. This is better for you than all you have amassed. Qur'án 10:58

Say: Verily a grace hath appeared which no blessing in creation hath exceled, if ye be of them that hearken.[43] Bahá'u'lláh

O My servants! Debar not yourselves from the Ocean of knowledge, and deprive not yourselves from the Sun of vision. The exhilarating breezes have wafted, bestowing freshness upon the dispirited. Words cannot describe the blessings of this glorious Day, and every attempt falleth short. Happy is the servant who recognizeth its value, and testifieth to its greatness.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

He Who is the All-Sufficing proclaimeth aloud: "The realm of joy hath been ushered in; be not sorrowful! The hidden mystery hath been made manifest; be not disheartened!"[45] Bahá'u'lláh

The Faith of God hath in this day been made manifest. He Who is the Lord of the world is come and hath shown the way. His faith is the faith of benevolence and His religion is the religion of forbearance. This faith bestoweth eternal life and this religion enableth mankind to dispense with all else. It verily embraceth all faiths and all religions.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

O friends of God! Incline your inner ears to the voice of the peerless and self-subsisting Lord, that He may deliver you from the bonds of entanglement and the depths of darkness and enable you to attain the eternal light.[47] Bahá'u'lláh

1 Yárán-i-Pársí, pp. 15–16. (prov. tr.)
2 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
3 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 41.
4 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 85–86.
5 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5.
6 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 141. (prov. tr.)
7 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 264. (prov. tr.)
8 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 174.
9 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 237.
10 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 344.
11 Quoted in letter of the Universal House of Justice to Iranian Bahá'ís residing outside Iran, 10 Feb. 1980.
12 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 84.
13 Payám-i-Malikút, p. 113.
14 *Gleanings from the Writings pf Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 118.
15 Nahju'l-Balághah, tr. into Persian by Dáryúsh Sháhín, pp. 279–280. For a study of the ḥadíth foretelling the darkness of our age refer to *An Introduction to Shíih Islám* by Moojan Momen
16 ibid., p. 268.
17 Bihár u'l-Anvár, vol. 2, p. 109.
18 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 157. (prov. tr.)
19 The Persian Bayán, p. 139. (prov. tr.)

20 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 30–31.
21 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 39. (prov. tr.)
22 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 16. (prov. tr.)
23 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 72. (prov. tr.)
24 Qámús-i-Íqán, vol. 1, p. 188. (prov. tr.)
25 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 255. (prov. tr.)
26 'Aqdáḥu'l-Faláḥ, p. 148.
27 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 229. (prov. tr.)
28 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 98. (prov. tr.)
29 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.
30 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 4.11, p. 70.
31 *Ṭáhirih: A Portrait in Poetry*, by Amin Banani, Kalimát Press, 2005.
32 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 32.
33 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 5.4, p. 73.
34 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 237.
35 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 160. (prov. tr.)
36 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 1.11, p. 8.
37 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 403—prov. tr.
38 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 84.
39 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 187. (prov. tr.)
40 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 19.
41 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 5.
42 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 6.
43 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 54. (prov. tr.)
44 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
45 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 5.7, p. 74.
46 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 3.5, p. 59.
47 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 5.1, p. 71.

2
How can we recognize the Messengers of God?

Ignoring the first call of the Messengers

Lack of attention to the call of the Messengers at the beginning of their appearance has been the way of most people. Is our age an exception to this rule? Are people of our time any different from their forefathers?

> Whenever a Messenger came to a people, they accused Him of falsehood.
>
> Qur'án 23:44

> As oft as an Apostle cometh unto you with that which yous souls desire not, ye swell with pride, accusing some of being imposters and slaying others.
>
> Qur'án 2:87

> *Never hath God manifested Himself in ways that the people imagined.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

At the beginning of *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh instructs us in the most important and most inescapable lesson of history. After detailing the history of the appearance of the former Messengers, and the deplorable behavior of people towards each one of Them, He calls on us to reflect and meditate on a number of questions: Why have people failed to recognize their Promised One when He first appeared? Why have people, in all ages, subjected the Messengers of God to denial, persecution and harm? What have been the people's difficulties? What factors explain their negligence and shortcomings? Why did people who had ardently desired the coming of their Promised One, engage in persecuting Him rather than declaring their belief at the moment of His Advent? Why did people who, in their imagination, revered their heavenly Beloved One and expressed their love for Him; yet, after His Manifestation, instead of joy and praise, they engaged in taunting and ridiculing Him and accusing Him of Falsehood? What was the reason for such shameful and bewildering behavior towards the Messengers of God?

With instructive questions such as those above—which simultaneously conceal and reveal the most essential lessons of history—Bahá'u'lláh aims to guide us away from the abyss of negligence and ignorance to the highway of knowledge and understanding. Through reflection on the former behavior of people towards the Messengers of God, i.e. denial and repudiation after the expression of love and expectation, and enmity in action after words of devotion and servitude, we may be edified and led to admit the truth that, perhaps unknowingly, we too could be the same kind of people.

> In their stories there is a lesson for those endued with understanding.
>
> Qur'án 12:111

> *Say: O ye that have eyes to see! The past is the mirror of the future. Gaze ye therein and be apprised thereof; perchance ye may be aided thereby to recognize the Friend and may be not the cause of His displeasure.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Is it difficult to recognize the Messengers of God? Does it require special training or expertise? Are religious leaders the only ones who can find and recognize the path to truth? Such thoughts and imaginings can never be in harmony with God's inscrutable wisdom and justice.

> *The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

How to recognize the Messengers of God

The heavenly scriptures show us how to recognize the Messengers of God. Without following these guidelines, it would be impossible to attain the gift of faith. In the brief statement below, Bahá'u'lláh teaches us the way:

> *Every servant of God must, in this Day, renounce three things in order to achieve three objectives. The first three things are greed, vain imaginings and worldly desires. The three objectives are recognition, acceptance, and certitude. This is the mystery of the Lord of Wealth, recorded in the heavenly Tablets.*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh first speaks of the impediments that one must remove on the path of Truth in order to reach the desired goal. One cannot exit a closed door or see the radiance of the sun with closed eyes. It is clear that numerous obstacles have ever been and will always be on people's path to the recognition of true religion and attainment of faith. In the above statement, Bahá'u'lláh lists three great obstacles preventing people from recognizing God's religions:

1. **Greed**: Being preoccupied with the affairs of the material life distracts us and diverts us away from God. Most people spend the best hours of their lives seeking physical comfort and ease, to such an extent that they find no opportunity for their spiritual well-being and their eternal destiny. Greed prevents us from obtaining nearness to the All-Sufficing Creator.
2. **Vain imaginings**: These can be described as false thoughts or beliefs that a person holds to be true, without any investigation or search. Why do Christians consider Muslims are misguided? Is it because of suspicion and vain imaginings, or is it based on proof and reason? Is it not possible that Muslims, in judging the new Faith, similarly become entrapped in vain imaginings? Divisions among the religions of God have the same cause; otherwise, all people would have been followers of one religion. Being aware of this truth, frees the heart of any believer from negligence and helps guide it to this truth: Never have God's Messengers appeared in conformity with people's expectations. Why should our Age be an exception to this pattern of human behaviour?
3. **Worldly desires**: In every human, two forces continually compete with each other: ephemeral comfort, honor and riches; and eternal ease, glory and blessings—love of the world, and love of God; attachment to the world, and hope in the everlasting Paradise. Clearly, the first desire of the self is to seek the comfort and riches of this world; it is not easy to exchange the honor and comfort of the present for the everlasting glory and ease of the future—i.e. trading the desires of the self for the eternal happiness of heaven.

Bahá'u'lláh also lists three gifts for anyone overcoming the obstacles:

- **Receptivity**—Recognition of God's religion and its whole-hearted acceptance
- **Proclamation of Faith**—Courageous expression of what is in one's heart
- **Certitude**—Reaching certitude and confidence in one's belief in God's Faith

Anyone passing through the three valleys of Greed, Vain Imaginings, and Worldly Desires, will attain the desired destination; otherwise, one will be deprived of true happiness and eternal life—which is superior to whatever can be imagined. Is it difficult to pass through these three valleys? Not at all, all that is needed to succeed is our will and desire.

The gracious God has ever encouraged us to seek and investigate. He advises us to use wisdom and understanding in following this counsel. Thus, ignoring it is a sign of deficiency in reason and understanding.

> Then give thou [Muhammad} the glad-tidings to servants [of God], who listen to the utterance and follow the best of it, those whom God guides; and those they are the men endued with understanding. Qur'án 39:17–18

For you and for all mankind, the knowledge of the fulfillment of the glad-tidings, the Message of God, and the recognition of the Messenger Who brought this Good News, is more important than any other matter. According to God's Will and Command, one must continue to investigate and search to uncover this great bounty and bestowal of God. Rejecting the truth of the "Great Announcement" without search and investigation will have dire consequences.

> Woe betide those who consider the Truth a lie, those who amuse themselves in idle discourse [their own suspicions and vain imaginings]. Qur'án 52:11–12

Whenever others—because of ignorance and prejudice—without any reason or proof, accuse us of sin or wrongdoing, we should stand up for ourselves, and consider the accusers as being unfair and lacking a conscience. However, too often when we hear the news of the appearance of God's Chosen Ones, we abandon this rule, and without investigation, accept the judgement of the ignorant and the prejudiced. Instead of investigating, we imitate; God has ever warned us against such behavior.

> Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge; for the ear, the eye and the heart, all these will be questioned [before God]. Qur'án 17:36

Every new religion is a treasure house overflowing with God's knowledge and wisdom. Studying this knowledge and wisdom, requires spending a considerable amount of time in research and investigation. The All-Knowing God has promised the knowledge of the straight Path only to those who, with all their hearts, strive to reach the object of their desire.

> Those who strive for Us, We shall, surely, guide them in Our Paths. Qur'án 29:69

> The One Sought will never reveal Himself without a seeker, nor will the Beloved unveil His beauty without a lover.[5] Ṭáhirih

If you seek God's favor and good pleasure, if you desire the limitless bounties of God, you must consider the knowledge of His Promise and Glad-tidings the most valuable and the most vital goal and longing of your life. This is because, in your journey from this world of dust to the next, the only lasting provision you have is the favor and good pleasure of God, which is dependent on the recognition of God's Chosen One for our Age.

> *If any man, in this Day, be the embodiment of all good deeds, and yet not attain the good pleasure of his Lord, his efforts shall come to naught. Strive, then, that you may achieve God's good pleasure.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: O My Servants! Do not forsake your high station. Recognize your worth and the value of these days.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

Be assured that your troubles and efforts will not be without reward. After carrying out God's command to seek and strive, and after becoming informed of the fulfillment of God's Promise—the mysteries and evidences of which are visible throughout the Qur'án—you will witness, in the mirror of your soul, the solution to that Great Puzzle in its utmost beauty and glory. Then you will clearly see the harvest of your efforts. This is the reward of those who rely on their own reason and understanding, rather than idly imitating their forefathers or following the vain imaginings of fanatical, ignorant and hypocritical leaders. People should use their own reason and conscience to determine their eternal destiny; they are those believers who see with their own eyes and not with the eyes of the blind.

Acquiring the knowledge of God's Promise in the Qur'án is the most worthy and essential matter with which God has charged you and all of mankind. You must spare no effort in the pursuit of this task, for to deny the Chosen One of God is to deny God.

> What transgression is greater than a calumny against God? Qur'án 11:18

Is it possible to ask God for the gift of guidance with a pure and refined intention, and not receive an answer? See with what love and tenderness our Creator speaks to us:

> I am near to you and hear the prayer of everyone who calls on Me; then answer My call and be faithful to Me that you may be guided to the straight Path. Qur'án 2:186

We shall know God by His Words

> The Lord ... revealed himself to Samuel through his word. 1 Samuel 3:21

> *Say: O people! How can a fleeting fancy compare with the Self-Subsisting, and how can the Creator be likened unto His creatures, who are but as the script of His Pen?*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

According to many verses in the Qur'án, God's Word is the best and most reliable measure for His recognition.

> The Word of God is exalted in Station. Qur'án 9:40

> God proves His Truth with His Words. Qur'án 10:82

Behold, how lofty is the station, and how consummate the virtue, of these verses which He hath declared to be His surest testimony, His infallible proof, the evidence of His all-subduing power, and a revelation of the potency of His will. He, the divine King, hath proclaimed the undisputed supremacy of the verses of His Book over all things that testify to His truth. For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars.[9] Bahá'u'lláh

This noble Qur'án is a Book hidden; none but the purified [pure-hearted] can touch [understand] it. Qur'án 56:77–79

We must be aware that a large portion of the Word of God relates to future events, particularly the promise of the appearance of new Messengers. Throughout this book, you have the opportunity to examine hundreds of quotes from heavenly scriptures; each use our Creator's special language, a language the like of which cannot be found in the works of any writer.

Reflecting and meditating on so many verses will create an incomparable image on the soul of any fair-minded seeker who, with all his heart and soul, desires to understand the knowledge of God and gain the gift of faith. This image is so excellent, so unique and matchless that it will leave no cause for doubt or hesitation.

Even though each of these verses is outwardly recorded and conveyed in the name of a Messenger, we should know that the Messengers do not speak of their own choosing; whatever they say is on behalf of the Creator, the One Who sends them; their sole duty is to proclaim to us God's Revelation.

Say: I am but a man like you who receives the Revelation. Qur'án 18:110

The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. The Gospel of John 14:10

The Lord, the God of your fathers ... has sent me. Exodus 3:15

The word "Say", which appears at the beginning of many verses of the Qur'án and the Bahá'í Writings, expresses the truth that the speaker is speaking by the command of God and not at his own choosing.

Say: O People! .... These are the verses of God which have been revealed unto Me. By God! They are not of Me, but from the Glorious Beloved (God). I am a servant who believeth in God and His verses. I have no movement or stillness of my own .... If I seek to remain silent in my abode, the Holy Spirit moveth Me and biddeth Me lift up my voice between earth and heaven; this is not of me but from His behest, if ye be of those who understand.[10] Bahá'u'lláh*

Say: It [the Qur'án] is sent by Him Who knows the secrets of heavens and earth. He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Qur'án 25:6

Say: O My Servants! The Guide is come. Hasten unto Him. The Peerless Seer hath arrived, showing the straight Path. It beseemeth him who hearkeneth to say, with his inner tongue: O my Lord! Thy Call hath revived the world and hath bestowed life upon it. My face is turning to Thee, and my soul is eager to meet Thee .... The

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* This provisional translation can be replaced by one of several similar quotes, i.e. *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, para. 192, pp. 98–99.

Lord of the world is come; His Way is unlike other ways, and His Words unlike other words. Hearken and come forth. This blessed Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer. This is the Word of God.[11] Bahá'u'lláh

Reflect on this question as much as possible: Is there any similarity between the Word of God and the sayings of deceitful and dishonest people who try to attribute their vain thoughts and imaginings to God?

As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:9

No one ever spoke the way this man (Jesus) does. Gospel of John 7:46

A knowledge of science is not needed to recognize the Word of God. Everyone has the capacity to distinguish the Word of God from human words; otherwise, the All-Knowing God would not have established His Word as the criteria for the recognition of His Messengers and the guide to the path of Truth.

Were it beyond the comprehension of men, how could it have been declared as a universal testimony unto all people?[12] Bahá'u'lláh

He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men, if ye be of them that ponder His Cause in their hearts. He will never deal unjustly with any one, neither will He task a soul beyond its power. He, verily, is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful.[13] Bahá'u'lláh

God hath, verily, made His Cause clear and irrefutable, in such wise that all people may be able to understand it.[14] Bahá'u'lláh

Either the Bahá'í Faith is a product of the mind of a shameless human, or it is the outpouring of the bounty and knowledge of the Creator of the universe. Would it be difficult to investigate and distinguish between two such utterly different alternatives?

Say: O people! How can a fleeting fancy compare with the Self-Subsisting, and how can the Creator be likened unto His creatures, who are but as the script of His Pen?[15] Bahá'u'lláh

Truth stands out clear from error. Qur'án 2:256

However, the difference between the two paths will only become clear if we see and judge the religion of God with our own eyes, not through the eyes of others, and investigate rather than imitate.

Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of any one except your self, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power.[16] Bahá'u'lláh

It is incumbent upon every soul to distinguish, by himself, the truth from falsehood.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

Role of language in the relationship between God and man

Whenever a discussion turns to the prophecies of the Promised One in the Qur'án, many Iranians excuse themselves from investigating and judging the truth of the Bahá'í Faith because of their lack of proficiency in Arabic. For this

reason, they shift the responsibility for their judgement onto others, in particular, their religious leaders. They assume that they can trust their soul and their eternal destiny to those who have learned Arabic, imagining that the key to understanding the bounties of God and attaining the eternal Paradise is a knowledge of Arabic.

Do Persian-speaking people—or any other non-Arabic speaking person—need to know Arabic in order to recognize the Promised One of the Qur'án? If, as a Muslim, the challenge of language appears great to you, ask yourself "Is my faith in Islam dependent upon understanding Arabic?" If without knowing Arabic you have accepted Islam, could you not also recognize another religion despite this shortcoming? Would not sending a Messenger the recognition of whose station is dependent on proficiency in a particular language be contrary to God's wisdom and justice? Do people who believe in Jesus know His mother tongue, Aramaic? Again, ask yourself "Are Western Christians who don't know Arabic excused from believing in the Qur'án?"

> *Say: O People of the earth! Be fair in your judgement. With what proof did you believe in former Revelations? For what reason do you deny this Grace that hath illuminated the world?*[18]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The verses of God state that a pure and refined spirit is needed for the recognition of the Promised One of the Age. Neither knowledge of the writings of scholars and leaders of religion, nor proficiency in a language of another people, are substitutes for striving and the love for truth. The All-Loving God will never deprive the pure-hearted seeker of His heavenly favor, good pleasure and gift; it has always been so and always will be. Only those who hide their spirit and heart behind the veils of selfish desires and vain imaginings are deprived of the knowledge of God.

If the veils of vain imagining and suspicion—woven into the warp and woof of false assumptions and baseless expectations of former generations—cover our inner vision, then we will not be led to the life-giving radiance of the Light of God, or be guided to the Beloved by the light of freedom and understanding.

Our destiny is in our hands

> God will not change His favor conferred on a people, unless they change what is in their own souls.
> Qur'án 8:53

At the end of this chapter, it is worthwhile to take another look into the Plan of the Creator and ask ourselves "Why have we come to this world, and before the end of our journey through this mortal home to the life beyond, what gift are we to obtain? On what does man's eternal salvation depend?"

> The greatest blessing is the good pleasure of God; the greatest victory is to attain this good pleasure.
> Qur'án 9:72

> *Know ye that a servant's glory resideth in his nearness unto God, and that, unless he draweth nigh unto Him, naught else can ever profit him, even should he hold sway over the entire creation.*[19]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Is attainment to an eternal and great salvation possible without a belief in the Chosen One of the age? If we do not attain this goal, of what benefit or result is our life? The knowledge of the fulfillment of God's Promise and a belief in the bearer of this Promise is God's greatest favor and bounty to His servants—and the fountainhead of their happiness in both worlds. However, according to historical evidence, each time this great heavenly gift has been offered to humanity, instead of being full of praise and gratitude, people have become ungrateful for the bounties of God.

> Few of My servants are thankful [grateful]. Qur'án 34:13

> If they see every sign, they will not believe; if they see the straight Path, they will not follow it; and if they see the path of error, they will follow it; because they consider Our signs falsehood. Qur'án 7:146

> Many among the people are neglectful of Our signs. Qur'án 10:92

> *... peoples of the earth are seen sunk in grievous heedlessness, and lost in manifest error.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

It is worthwhile to remember that God does not need our belief and never gains or losses by our faith or denial. If we refuse to search for Truth, then we have been unfair to ourselves. Profit or loss, both are ours. This point has been repeatedly and emphatically raised in the heavenly Books.

> Say: O People! The Truth has come to you from your Lord; whosoever choses the straight Path, does so for his own sake, and whosoever goes astray does so at his own loss. Qur'án 10:108

> *By God! If ye do well, to your own behoof will ye do well; and if ye deny God and His signs, We, in very truth, having God, can well dispense with all creatures and all earthly dominion.*[21] The Báb

> Say: This Truth is from your Lord. Let him who wishes believe and he who wishes deny. Qur'án 18:29

> *By God! He, verily, desireth naught for you but that which draweth you closer to Him and bringeth you into the Kingdom of eternity. He is the All-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

> Evidences and proofs have come to you manifest and clear. Whosoever can see it is to his own benefit, and whosoever is blind has deprived himself. Qur'án 6:104

> *If in this great Day the soil of human capacity and reality be not made green and verdant, there can be no doubt that it will forever remain deprived of the bounties of the All-Merciful, and will bring forth naught but thorns of regret and despair.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is the Day of knowledge and understanding. Deprive not yourselves therefrom.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: O Friends! This Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer.*[26] Bahá'u'lláh

1 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 109. (prov. tr.)
2 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 1.16, p. 1.
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 211.
4 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 1. (prov. tr.)
5 Ẓuhúru'l-Haqq, p. 500. (prov. tr.)
6 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 106. (prov. tr.)
7 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 1 and 2, p. 155. (prov. tr.)
8 *Gleaning from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 188.
9 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 205.
10 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 2 (compendium of vol. 2,3,4), p. 245. (prov. tr.)
11 Yárán-i-Pársí, pp. 15–16. (prov. tr.)
12 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, para. 232, p. 210.
13 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 105–106
14 Ẓuhúru'l-Haqq, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
15 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 188.
16 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 106–107.
17 Ẓuhúru'l-Haqq, p. 283. (prov. tr.)
18 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 145. (prov. tr.)
19 *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 187.
20 *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81.
21 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 42.
22 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 188. (prov. tr.)
23 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 50. (prov. tr.)
24 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 131.
25 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 334.
26 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 18.

Part 2
The Seal of the Prophets: Muslims' greatest obstacle

This part contains three chapters:

3. **A major cause of division in God's religion**
4. **Appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad, part 1**
5. **Appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad, part 2**

> *The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled.*[1]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Never hath God manifested Himself in ways that the people imagined.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

How to pass over an imaginary barrier

This part may be considered a separate book. It is not related to the proofs of the truth of the Bahá'í Faith, and it is added only to remove a serious misunderstanding and a fundamental misinterpretation.

The aim of this book is the explanation and elaboration of the verses of the glorious Qur'án concerning the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our age. The subject of Khátamu'n-Nabiyyín ("The Seal of the Prophets") has no relationship to the appearance of these two Promised Ones. However, **this belief has become a permanent barrier erected in the hearts of the believers by Muslim leaders and scholars—using the two words khátam ("seal") and nabí ("prophet")—that they have placed as an obstacle to the acceptance of all future Messengers of God.** This barrier is so insurmountable and strong, and has so penetrated the hearts of most faithful Muslims, that passing beyond it is extremely difficult if not impossible. It is of great importance for the believers to discover the true meaning of **khátam** and **nabí**.

> Furthermore, among the "veils of glory" are such terms as the "Seal of the Prophets" and the like, the removal of which is a supreme achievement ....[3]
> Bahá'u'lláh

This part, which contains three chapters, is written only for Muslims who, because of an **imaginary barrier,** refuse to investigate the Bahá'í Faith. These believers are confident that after Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, no Messenger will be sent to guide humanity. If you do not follow such a belief, then begin your investigation with chapter 6—**prophecies of the Qur'án regarding the Bahá'í Faith**—which is the main subject of this book.

1 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 12–13.
2 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 109. (prov. tr.)
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 166.

3
A major cause of division in God's religion

God is full of grace to the people, but most of them are not grateful. Qur'án 27:73

A subject that has been greatly emphasized in the Qur'án is to learn from the fate of former Messengers and religions.

All that we relate to you regarding the Messengers ... is for the believers to be advised and reminded. Qur'án 11:120

Their stories are instructions for those endued with understanding. Qur'án 12:111

This subject has also been confirmed and emphasized in the holy scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith.

Say: O ye that have eyes to see! The past is the mirror of the future. Gaze ye therein and be apprised thereof.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Imagine that you have suddenly forgotten all your past experiences and memories. How difficult would your life become? For this very reason, the proceedings of each nation should be based on the lessons learned by former generations over the course of many centuries. Historians state that any nation failing to learn from its past mistakes is condemned to repeating them. Perhaps the most important lesson that history teaches us is that people do not learn from the lessons of history. History also teaches us that God's religions have always been misrepresented by its adherents—particularly by religious leaders. Religious wars are clear testimony to this claim.

It is worthwhile to examine how religious leaders have been able to change God's pure religions—which have been manifested to spread love and unity—into instruments of enmity and division. History demonstrates that the misinterpretation of the words of God's Messengers has always been the source of enmity and division. Misinterpretations have been many and diverse. The focus of this chapter is on a misinterpretation that has prevented people from accepting new religions of God.

History teaches us that shortly after the appearance of each of God's religions, many religious leaders—for the purpose of strengthening their position and rank—have looked for a verse, an idea or even a word in their heavenly Books that bestows a special privilege or distinction on their religion and, in some way, secures the superiority of their beliefs over other religions. This feeling of superiority has always been the source of prejudice, and prejudice is the source of enmity and war.

After finding the desired verse or word, religious leaders of every Faith have given special importance to that verse or word, and made it the foundation of their beliefs. Over the course of centuries and ages, a framework of imaginings and desires has been added to that verse or word to build a vast and magnificent castle. The religious leaders then teach their follower never to step

out of that safe and secure shelter, because crafty deceivers are awaiting them at every corner. Their followers, having placed trust in their leaders, have considered their command as God's Commandment, and preferred the peace and tranquility of the ancestral castle to the dangers of an expeditionand wandering in the land of strangers.

Consider the scholars and religious leaders of the Faith of Moses. Those leaders taught their followers that they are God's chosen people; they must appreciate this gift and strive to protect it; acceptance of any other religion would rob them of this precious gift. Therefore, if they desired to follow the path of truth and salvation, they must cling only to the religion of Moses and not associate with followers of other religions. These leaders built an insurmontable barrier using the verses of their heavenly Book to prevent the followers from accepting their Promised Messiah. For example, they taught their followers that the Promised Prophet would appear in the world and gain victory over kings. To prove their claim, they offered verses like the following:

> But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel .... Micah 5:2

> One of your own descendants I will place on your throne. Psalms of David 132:11

Now, more than two thousand years after the appearance of their Promised One, Jesus Christ, the religious leaders and the learned of the Jewish Faith are still teaching their followers to expect the coming of a Promised One with power and kingship, thus preventing them from accepting religions such as Christianity and Islám.

Christian leaders also ignored the lessons of history. They did not learn from the fate of the former generations, and refused to accept Islám. The verse that these deniers of truth found and used in their heavenly Book to construct a lofty and magnificent castle to warn Christians against accepting Islám or any other religion, is this well-known utterance of Jesus:

> I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Gospel of John 14:6

The misinterpretation and misuse of the above verse teaches

Christians that stepping out of their forefathers' castle, even for a brief visit, is a fearful and dangerous act. Now, fourteen centuries after the appearance of Islám, the generality of the world's Christians think—on the strength of the above phrase—that they have no need of other religions and refuse to investigate the heavenly Message of the Qur'án.

> The Messiah (Jesus) was only a Messenger, like other Messengers before Him. Qur'án 5:75

> O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate about your religion. Qur'án 4:171

Likewise, the religious leaders and the learned of Islám did not learn the lessons of history, and followed in the ways of leaders of previous religions. These lords of position and power also warned their followers never to step out

of the towering and majestic castle of Islám, and to reject the new Faith of God. With great confidence and certainty, they taught their followers that with the appearance of their religion, never again would the world receive another religion. Whatever the gracious God wanted to teach humanity had been revealed in the Qur'án. For as long as the world would last, the Creator of universe would not speak again and would not reveal another Book like the Qur'án, which is the final chapter of God's Revelation.

The religious leaders and learned of Islám also needed a verse to convince their followers and to leave no room for any doubts or misgivings about their claim of finality. They found it in verse 33:40:

> Muḥammad ... is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. Qur'án 33:40

These powerful and influential leaders engaged in an interpretation and elaboration of the meaning of khátam ("seal") to construct an impressive and impregnable castle that proved the superiority of their religion over all other religions and, hence, to prohibit Muslims from accepting any other religion. Their one-sided and emphatic interpretation, left no doubt or hesitation for anyone. Thus, in the same way as the leaders of former religions had done, they used misinterpretations of God's Word to prevent people from accessing the truth. They also distorted the original meaning of khátam ("seal"), and gave it new meanings. This became a fundamental pillar of Islám and the key reason for its supposed superiority over other religions.

Before we can embark on solving the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án, it is necessary to remove from the eyes the thick veil that Muslim leaders have woven around khátam. For as long as this Puzzle is hidden under the veil of khátam, devout Muslims will not step out of their ancient castle to witness the greatness and magnificence of the new religion of God.

Understanding the meaning of khátam is like a key that opens the door for the seekers of truth and shows them the beauty and glory of God's new Citadel. Until this door opens and the seekers step out of the bounds of the beliefs of their forefathers, no proof will arouse their curiosity, and the rays of the magnificent glory of the new and beautiful Citadel of God and the new Garden of the Faith of Bahá' will not be manifest to them.

The purpose of this and the two next chapters is the removal of a great barrier from the path of Muslims. The main purpose of this chapter is the explanation of the meaning of khátam and the manner in which it has been misinterpreted and misused. The primary purpose of the next two chapters is the presentation of the verses of the Qur'án that make obvious the true meaning of khátam. After the removal of this great veil from the eyes of seekers, we will begin the introduction and solution of the great Puzzle of the Qur'án. As was mentioned before, if belief in the Khátam an-Nabiyyín does not form a barrier to your spiritual search you may start studying chapter 6.

The meaning of khátam

The title Khátam an-Nabiyyín was bestowed upon the Muḥammad, Prophet of Islám, only once and in only one verse:

> Muḥammad is not the father* of any of your men. He is the Messenger [Rasúl] of God and the Seal [Khátam] of the Prophets [an-Nabiyyín] Qur'án 33:40

To begin, it is necessary to know that there are two similar Arabic words: **khátam** and **khátim**. These two words have some common meanings; however, each one has a specific use in Arabic. The word used in the Qur'án is khátam, not khátim. This is very significant. As in other languages, many Arabic words have a number of meanings. Dictionaries mention the diverse meanings of each word in order of their importance and use. According to Mu'ín's Persian dictionary:

Khátam

- Ring
- Seal, stone
- The lover's mouth
- Last
- Objects made of ivory

Khátim

- The one who finishes
- End, conclusion

It may be helpful to refer to an Arabic-Persian dictionary, *Riyáḍu'l-Lughát*:

Khátam

- Ring
- A ring that is also a seal, i.e. on its stone the name and signature of a person is recorded
- Seal, whatever is used to seal or stamp
- The end or conclusion of something
- Depression in the back of the neck

Khátim

- One who finishes
- One who ends something
- One who stamps, the person who seals

In Persian, khátam is commonly used for an inlaid work of art or mosaic art; khátim is used in "end of service".

To investigate the meaning of khátam, it is worthwhile referring to several well-known and reliable translations of the Qur'án and see how the masters of the Arabic language have translated khátam. Perhaps the most famous and the most commonly used English translation of the Qur'án that is trusted and favorably regarded by Muslims worldwide is the translation by Yúsuf 'Alí. This researcher studied Qur'anic interpretations for many years and presented a comprehensive translation of this heavenly Book to the Western world. This translation—with support from the king of Saudi Arabia—has been edited,

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* The word "father" in this verse has a symbolic meaning. A father is responsible for the protection and defence of his children; the only responsibility of the Messengers is to inform people of God's message and to invite them to accept it.

The only duty of the Messenger of God is to proclaim the Word. Qur'án 5:99

approved and confirmed by that country's great religious scholars, and Muslims from Arab countries now publish it in the USA.

In translating khátam, Yúsuf 'Alí has selected the English word "seal". The following translators have also used the word "seal".

- *The Koran (Interpreted)*, tr. A. J. Arberry
- *Al-Qur'án*, tr. Aḥmad 'Alí
- *The Koran*, tr. Rodwell
- *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, tr. Muhammad Pickthall
- *The Message of the Qur'án*, tr. Muḥammad Asad
- *The Koran*, tr. N. J. Dawood
- *An Interpretation of the Qur'án*, tr. Majíd Fakhry
- *The Qur'án*, trs. Muḥammad Taqí-ud-Dín al-Hiláli and Dr Muḥammad Muḥsin Khán
- *The Holy Qur'án*, tr. Mawláná Muḥammad 'Alí
- *The Holy Qur'án*, trs. Amatu'l Rahman 'Omar and 'Abdu'l Mannan 'Omar

One of the translators of the Qur'án into English who has left us an excellent translation of the Qur'án is Majid Fakhry. This translator, like all the other translators whose mother tongue is Arabic, has used "seal" for khátam. A committee at the al-Azhar University responsible for the compilation and translation of Islamic books, including the Holy Qur'án, has approved this translation:

"Nothing contrary to Islamic beliefs exist in this translation".*

The conclusion we draw from the study of the two words **khátam** and **khátim** is that the primary and the most common meaning of khátam is "**seal**"; and the primary and the most common meaning of **khátim** is "the one who ends something" or "the last". If the Qur'án used khátim, then there would have been no need for this chapter; because khátim is a noun agency and its meaning determined and specific; in that case, Muḥammad would have been the last of a succession of Prophets. However, our problem is that the Qur'án uses khátam, and this word is subject to interpretation, because "**seal**" has a symbolic meaning and not an exact literal meaning. Imagine you are speaking to a group of people, and begin by telling the listeners "I have one hour to speak and will finish my talk at 9 pm." Your statement is not subject to interpretation and leaves no room for ambiguity. Now, imagine instead you tell the listeners "I am honored to be your speaker and indeed I am your **seal.**" What would the listeners think? Each one, using his own power of imagination, can construct a special meaning in his mind. The use of khátam in the Sura 33 al-Aḥzáb has such a condition. If we wish, we could infer different meanings from it based on our own desires.

Let us see how the religious leaders and learned of Islám—using their imagination—derived from khátam the meaning of "last". Yúsuf 'Alí—the well-

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* al-Azhar, Center for Islámic Discussions, the Office of Discussions, Compilations and Translations.

known and reliable translator for Muslims, and also skilled in Qur'anic interpretation—had deduced the meaning "last" for khátam in this manner:

> When a document is sealed it is complete, and there can be no further addition. The holy Prophet Muḥammad closed the long line of Apostles. God's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muḥammad. The later ages will want thinkers and reformers, not Prophets. This is not an arbitrary matter. It is a decree full of knowledge and wisdom, "for God has full knowledge of all things."*

Some Iranian translators have diverged further from the interpretation of Yúsuf 'Alí, and with their own power of imagination, they derived a new meaning for khátam. Muḥammad Káẓim Mu'izzí and Abu'l-Qásim Páyandih have used sarámad, a Persian word meaning "master" instead of "seal" in an apparent attempt to exalt Muḥammad:

> Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of God and the Master of all the Messengers. Mu'izzí

> Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, rather he is the Messenger of God and the Master of all the Messengers. Páyandih

It is not known why these two translators used sarámad ("master") as the meaning for khátam; for in none of the dictionaries has this meaning been recorded for khátam. Have these two honored translators been aware of the consequence of their translation? For by using the word "master" instead of "seal", we will lose the meaning of "the last". "Being the Master" will sever the relationship of khátam with the future. In this case, the subject of time is not being considered, only the rank of Muḥammad is being considered. The issue of being the last or not is completely set aside.

The well-known Mujtahid, Makárim Shírází, has translated khátam an-Nabiyyín as "the last of the prophets".

Most translators of the Qur'án into Persian have simply used khátam: Khátam "of the **Messengers**". The following are a sample:

Bahá'ud-Dín Khurram Sháhí	'Abdu'l-Muḥammad Áyatí
Muḥammad Mihdí Fúládvand	Mihdí Iláhí Qumsháhí
Mas'úd Ansárí	Ḥusayn-'Alí Kawtharí
Ṭáhirih Saffárzádih	Seven divines of the district of Qum

The title Khátam an-Nabiyyín is the pillar and foundation of one of the most important Muslim beliefs. Its fate relies upon an understanding of the meaning of the title. Why do most translators of the Qur'án refuse to mention the meaning of Khátam?

Let us return to the interpretation of Yúsuf 'Alí; this well-known scholar and interpreter makes two comments in his interpretation:

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* Yúsuf 'Alí in *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'án*, fn. 3731 to 33:40, p. 1069.

- The use of "**seal**" is the proof of the completeness of a subject or document.
- Completeness signifies finality.

Is this interpretation wise or acceptable? According to what we will see in the next two chapters, many verses of the Qur'án point or allude to the coming of Messengers after Muḥammad. Before we investigate these verses, it is worthwhile considering in this chapter the meaning of khátam, and to ask Yúsuf 'Alí and other Muslim scholars the following questions:

1. If the Qur'án intended the word khátam to mean "the last", why has **khátim** not been revealed in the verse? This small difference in the pronunciation of a word would have completely solved the problem, and the verse would have left no room for doubt for anyone; since **khátim** has a definite meaning. Then what was the reason for choosing khátam, which has many symbolic meanings, instead of **khátim,** which has a definite meaning? This issue is of great importance.
2. A "seal" is used in place of a signature; the basic purpose of a signature in any document is the confirmation and certification of the subject in it. How do we know that khátam is intended to signify bringing the line of former Messengers to an end, and not the confirmation and certification of them? Is it acceptable to ignore the basic purpose of a "seal" and replace it with another purpose? When we tell someone: "Sign this letter", what is our basic purpose? Is our intention to confirm the letter or to finish it? Is it not our intention to say: "With your seal proves that the matter recorded in the letter is from you? To end or complete is a secondary meaning of the word "seal", not its primary and literal meaning.
3. Let us assume that the Prophet of Islám was a "Seal" at the end of a document containing the names of a series of Messengers. If God produces a new document with new names, would this contradict the previous assumption?
4. Is the place of a seal always at the end of a document? It is customary to place a seal at the end of a document but it is definitely not required.
5. In the past, it has been customary to place a seal on the top or on the sides of a letter.
6. Is it permissible to add anything to a document after it has been signed?
7. Arabic is a very rich language. Is there a word better than khátam in Arabic to signify "finality"?
8. The glorious Qur'án contains the explanation of every important matter:

> The explanation of everything is in this Book; it is guidance and mercy for those who believe. Qur'án 12:111

> This Book (the Qur'án) has no shortcoming (nothing is needed that has not been made clear in this Book). Qur'án 6:38

The issue of "finality" is one of the most significant problems in Islám. Is it possible that a book as complete as the Qur'án would leave in ambiguity an issue on which the fate of the world depends? Is it fair that a matter as important as this is not clearly explained through repeated and decisive words throughout the Qur'án? The assumption that Muḥammad is the final

Messenger is NOT supported by the Qur'án since there are numerous verses in the Qur'án that testify to the coming of future Messengers.

9. Was it not necessary that an issue of such importance be at least mentioned in the verse itself? The verse that uses the word khátam does not relate to the matter of "being the last".

Confirmation and certification of God's Messengers

> *In every Revelation, God, glorified be He, hath confirmed the formerly revealed Book.*[2]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Let us see what the title "**Seal of the Prophets**" signifies. What is a seal used for? As it was mentioned, the main reason for the use of a seal is to confirm and certify. The seal guarantees the validity of every document; and in the past, has frequently been used instead of a signature. If we interpret the title "Seal of the Prophets" in this manner we conclude that one of the important aims of Muḥammad has been the confirmation of God's Messengers and certification of the heavenly Books, including the Qur'án.

> This Qur'án ... is a confirmation of what is gone before it and a further explanation. There can be no doubt that it is from the Lord of the Worlds (God).
> Qur'án 10:37

> Whatever We have revealed to you in this Book is the truth; it also confirms whatever has been revealed before.
> Qur'án 35:31

> Before this, the Book of Moses was a guide and a sign of God's mercy; and this Book (the Qur'án) confirms it.
> Qur'án 46:12

> God sent down to you the Book, in truth; it confirms what went before it.
> Qur'án 3:3

The previous verses are samples of Qur'anic verses that confirm the Prophet of Islám, the former Messengers and their heavenly Books. There are many similar verses in the Qur'án, all of which confirm Khátam as the "**Seal of Approval**". Where khátam is used in 33:40, three important points are made:

- Muḥammad is not your "father"; (He does not play the role of your father; the Messenger is not responsible for your belief or denial).
- His duty is to convey the Message. God testifies to his truth and his responsibility.
- He also testifies to the truth and responsibility of former Messengers and places the Seal of confirmation on them.

To confirm or certify a signature means proclaiming that it is genuine. The Messengers also continually place the Seal of confirmation and certification on the truth of former Messengers.

A study of the holy Qur'án demonstrates that this heavenly Book confirms the following:

- Praise of the One All-Powerful God
- Praise of former Messengers, their confirmation and honor
- Confirmation of His Holiness Muḥammad and the glorious Qur'án

- Confirmation of future Messengers, and ways of recognizing them
- Good and evil behavior
- Advice and counsel, encouragement and exhortation
- The behavior of deniers and evil-doers, and their punishment
- The behavior of true believers and their reward
- The social teachings of Islám
- The eternal world, the metaphoric descriptions of Heaven and Hell

The topic of "Confirmation" is also found in Christian holy Books.

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. 1 John 4:1–2

Muḥammad has given the same "Spirit of God" title to Jesus Christ. The confirmation of Christ in the Qur'án is a clear sign of the truth of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. The glorious Qur'án has proven this sign in the most perfect way. Proclaiming the station of His Holiness Jesus Christ by someone born in the midst of the savage Arabs of that time, is a clear indication that the speaker is inspired by God's Voice. If Christians looked with the eye of fairness, they would accept the Prophet of Islám for this reason alone.

According to historical records, most people are willing to construct their eternal home with the sticks and stones of idle fancy and vain imaginings and, until their death, they live in perfect comfort and peace. In our age, millions of Christians—without any search or investigation—consider Muslims have been misled and that the Qur'án is a fabrication. These negligent people consider no home worthy of attainment except the home of their ancestors.

Like the Christians, the majority of Muslims of this age also refuse to investigate the Bahá'í Faith. These believers in the Qur'án, have entrusted their freedom of choice—the greatest gift of God on which their eternal destiny depends—into the hands of others, the hands of religious leaders who have raised an outwardly magnificent and strong castle based on their misinterpretation of one word. Is it according to the dictates of knowledge and wisdom to place one's eternal destiny on such an invalid interpretation? The next two chapters will present, in detail, the answers to this question.

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 10.
2 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 151.

4
Appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad, part 1

Part 2 of this book does not aim to present reasons and proofs. Its aim is to remove the most important barrier in the path of Muslims: their unwise and unacceptable interpretation of the title Khátam an-Nabiyyín ("**the Seal of the Prophets**").

Thinking and reflecting on the verses of God

In the mind of most Muslims, it is considered an evident fact that the Qur'án is the last Book of God and Islám is the last religion. With the passage of time this understanding has become so deeply rooted in the minds of people that very few entertain any doubts about it, or require any proof of its validity. Muslims are very disturbed when they hear any view that contradicts this firm opinion. The only way to solve this conundrum is to carefully investigate the verses of the Qur'án. To achieve this aim, carefully read all the material that is presented in this chapter and weigh it with the balance of reason; then, compare it to what you have heard before deciding which interpretation is more sensible and accords with God's wisdom.

According to God's Word in the Qur'án, a wise person is he who hears various communications, and after reflecting on their meaning, chooses the best of them:

> Therefore, bring the good news to the people who hear the words, then follow the best of them; God guides such people, and they are endued with understanding.
> Qur'án 39:17–18

This book contains a great deal of new material for all readers. Even Muslim divines, who consider themselves the source of knowledge and the ones others should emulate, are unaware of these facts. To comprehend all this new material, it is essential to reflect on them. According to the testimony of the heavenly Books, the best minutes of our life are those spent in searching for answers to the question of our eternal life; because that is why we have come to this world. This document is a step toward solving this great puzzle. To succeed in this undertaking, it is necessary to read, several times, the verses mentioned in this book. Each time you read, the meaning and purpose of God's Word should become more apparent to you.

Consider the mysteries of the Qur'án as flickers of a beautiful, bright light made of a thousand candles spread throughout its verses. The aim of this book is to gather and display all those precious candles. Each chapter that you read progressively unfolds the beauty and radiance of the light of God. If you strive with impartiality and a love of truth in your heart to solve this grand enigma, ultimately the brightness of the light of a thousand candles will envelope your whole being.

God's unchangeable way

Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate—with perfect clarity and emphasis—that the holy Qur'án has given the glad-tidings of the appearance of other Messengers. If the meaning of the phrase Khátam an-Nabiyyín ("the Seal of the Prophets") was "the last Messenger", then the All-Wise Creator would have revealed other verses to elaborate on and emphasize such a meaning, and would have clarified the word khátam. However, the opposite of this is true—in numerous verses the glorious Qur'án testifies to the coming of future Messengers. It is befitting to begin with the verses that demonstrate the method of God:

> We surely sent Messengers before you .... For every age there is a Book. God will change what He will and keep what He will. The Source of Books is with Him.
> Qur'án 13:38–39

> Surely, We appointed for each ummah* a Messenger. Qur'án 16:36

> Every nation has a Guide. Qur'án 13:7

> For every ummah We ordained rules and rites that they may remember the name of God. Qur'án 22:34

> Verily, We sent You in Truth to bring glad-tidings and to warn; and God never left an ummah without a Warner. Qur'án 35:24

> Never will there be any change in God's Way [Sunnah].† Qur'án 48:23

The previous verses clearly demonstrate that the loving God never leaves people without a Messenger and Guide; and for this, and in every other age, He has revealed a new Book. The verse "**For every age there is a Book**" shows that the communication between God and His servants will never end; God's way is to express love and kindness; the duty of the servants is to express servitude and adoration to the loving God. We are mirrors of God's favor, mercy and love. Without the radiance of His beauty our soul is in darkness. Is it possible that the Sun of the beauty and wisdom of the All-Knowing God would suddenly deprive us from seeing His Face and abandon us in darkness? Is it possible that a mother or father would suddenly go silent and refuse to speak to their beloved children?

The verses mentioned also clarify the meaning of **ummah.** According to these verses, ummah consists of a group of people to whom God has sent a Messenger; examples of such umam (nations) are the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims.

Death and Resurrection of Ummahs

The glorious Qur'án also explains the reason why the Almighty sends to every ummah a new Messenger and a new Book. According to the testimony of this Book, just as every human has a fixed period of life after which his end will

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* Umma(h) (English ummah, Arabic pl. umam) means nation, people; community; generation; more specifically to Muslim people with a common ideology and culture.

† Sunnah means way, tradition, custom or method.

come, God also bestows a fixed time and life for each ummah. At the completion of that period, the spirit of an ummah will end:

> The term of an ummah cannot be hastened or delayed. Qur'án 15:5 & 23:43

The term **ajal** means the death or the end of a fixed time. Why does the time of an ummah end? It is due to the loss of **"the spirit of faith and love of God".** When does the end of an ummah occur? When people are close to the place of worship but remote from the Object of worship; when churches, synagogues, and mosques are at their height of magnificence and beauty, but the world is full of injustice and hearts are filled with sorrow and worry; when religious leaders use religion and faith as a means of gaining wealth and transient sovereignty. This is the winter of faith and conscience. However, the end of each winter is followed by a new Day and a new spring. With God's help, the Messengers will always bring the gift of a new spring to humankind. These Chosen Ones appear at a fixed and preordained time, giving new life to the people:

> *Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been reborn in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

A person without faith is as "dead" in the sight of God:

> Those who worship other than God ... are as dead and deprived of life. Qur'án 16:20–21

In the time of Christ to have life was also connected to having faith:

> I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me ... will never die. John 11:25–26

Allusions to "Death of the spirit" meaning being remote from God, and "being restored to life" meaning nearness to God, are often found used in the heavenly Books:

> How can you blaspheme against God? You were dead, He gave you life. Then He will take your life (cause you to die), and once again revive you. Then to Him shall you return. Qur'án 2:28

> *He is truly wise whom the world and all that is therein have not deterred from recognizing the light of this Day, who will not allow men's idle talk to cause him to swerve from the way of righteousness. He is indeed as one dead who, at the wondrous dawn of this Revelation, hath failed to be quickened by its soul-stirring breeze. He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

> Truly, Thou canst not bestow hearing on the dead or the deaf who turns away from Thee, nor canst Thou guide the blind who is lost. Thou canst only bestow hearing on those who believe in Our verses (signs) and submit to God's Will. Qur'án 27:80–81

> O believers! When God and His Messenger call you to that which will give you life, respond favorably; and know that God is placed between a man and his heart, and He it is to Whom you will be gathered. Qur'án 8:24

The next few verses also show that the death of ummahs and the sending of new Messengers is a permanent and unchangeable sequence:

> For every ummah there is a Messenger. When their Messenger appears, He will judge fairly between them and will not wrong them. The people will say: When will this Promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful? **Say: .... For every ummah a term has been fixed; when their term is reached [their time is ended], they cannot hasten or delay it even by one hour.** Qur'an 10:47–49

In the previous verses several important matters are mentioned:

- God's way is to send a Messenger to every ummah.
- A time limit is prescribed for every ummah.
  It is clear that these two points are interrelated: the end of an ummah is a sign that a new one will begin with the appearance of a new Messenger; and the appearance of a new Messenger is a sign of the conclusion of the term of the previous ummah and religion.
- The previous verses state that people ask when will the "Promise" of God be fulfilled. It is not mentioned what is the "Promise" of God that people were curious about. However, the answer given to the people provides a clue: it is the conclusion of the term of every ummah that cannot be hastened or delayed even by an hour. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the people's question relates to the time of the end of Islám and the promise of the appearance of a new ummah and a new Faith from God.

> *Hear, with heart and soul, the Call of the Desire of the World, for it bestoweth everlasting life.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.** [4] Bahá'u'lláh

Wasaṭ ("middle") ummah

The next few verses clarify the place or the timing of Muslims relative to other umam ("communities"):

> In this way, we placed your nation [Muslims] in the middle, so that you be witnesses to the [actions of] other people [former nations], and the Messenger [Muḥammad] be a witness to your actions. Qur'án 2:143

> There were before you (Muslims) those We destroyed; their Messenger came to them with proofs and signs; but they did not believe. Thus, We punish the wrongdoers. Then We placed you heirs in the land after them so that We (test you) can see how you behave. Qur'án 10:13–14. See Qur'án 35:39

It is clear that the previous verses are addressed to Muslims. In Sura 2 al-Baqarah, Muslims are named the "**middle**" ummah. The purpose for "being in the middle" is to allow **Muslims to witness the actions of former people**, to see how they behaved, observe their mistakes, note their continual rejection of

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* The death of an ummah ("nation, people") at the end of a pre-ordained time, and its revival (Resurrection) at the time of the manifestation of the new Messengers, is discussed in detail in two chapters: 18 **Spiritual life** and 23 **The appearance of a new creation**.

their Messengers, and learn of their ultimate fate. Then it is stated that God's Messenger will also, in the same way, be a witness to your (Muslims) doings. The first matter brought up in this verse is repeated many times in other verses. Muslims were asked to look at the fate of the former generations, which were to serve as examples for themselves.

In the Sura 10 Yúnus, God is reminding the Muslims that people have always denied their Messengers. Then God tells us: I replaced these people with you to see how you will behave, to test you, to see if you will also deny the Messenger who will appear after the Apostle of God (Muḥammad).

Verses 2:143 and 10:14 warn Muslims not to be arrogant and self-satisfied. God's tests have not ended; you will one day be in the position of former nations. Therefore, strive to learn from their fate and do not deny the new Messenger; know that God is a witness to your actions.

> We sent you a Messenger to be a witness to what you do. Qur'án 73:15

Islám in history

Former umam	The middle ummah: Islám	Future umam
We placed you as a middle ummah		(Qur'án 2:143)
We placed you successors to former generations		(Qur'án 10:14)

Just as we turned to dictionaries for the meaning of khátam, it is appropriate to turn to dictionaries for the meaning of wasaṭ ("middle").

Wasaṭ in Mu'ín dictionary

1. Something that is located in between (whether surrounded by equal or unequal sides)
2. Middle, between, centre
3. Something not good nor bad
4. Something not much nor little
5. Something that is not short nor long
6. Something that is not slender nor fat

Wasaṭ in Sukhan dictionary

1. A place the distance of which is approximately equal from sides or intended places (spatial)
2. A time that is about equally distanced from two specific or intended times (temporal)
3. Something of inferior quality, 2nd grade, middle grade (value)
4. Neither good nor bad (quality)

Instead of accepting the basic and specific meanings for wasaṭ (middle), many Muslim scholars have deduced figurative and uncommon meanings. They have constructed—from their imaginings and inclinations—a building outwardly strong but inwardly weak and unreliable. These scholars have stated that "moderate" was the intended meaning of wasaṭ. Hence God said Muslims were a "balanced" nation, and will continue to be so; they have inclinations neither to the right nor to the left; they incline neither to extravagance nor to wastefulness. Another group imagined "middle" indicated a geographic position was intended, since in the ancient times, Muslims resided in the middle of other

nations.* Yet another group said that being "in the middle" means being just, since a just person takes neither the side of the wrong-doer nor the side of the wronged. Such interpretations encounter various problems. For example, among others, the meaning does not conform with:

- The subject being discussed in the Qur'anic verse
- Islamic teachings
- The character and behavior of many contemporary Muslims
- The character and behavior of Muslims in former times
- The basic and common meaning of wasaṭ

Translators who have chosen the basic and literal meaning of wasaṭ

Rodwell	Thus, we have made you a central people
Arberry	Thus, we appointed you a midmost nation
Muḥammad Pickthall	Thus, we have appointed you a middle nation
Muḥammad Káẓim Mu'izzí	a middle ummah (from Persian)

Translators who have chosen figurative meaning of wasaṭ

Ahmad Ali	a temperate people
Shakír	a medium nation
Muḥammad Asad	a community of the middle way
Yúsuf 'Alí	justly balanced
Ráshid Khalífah	impartial
Dawúd	a just community
Qumshahí	adorned with a temperate and praiseworthy character (tr. from Persian)

Translator who has devised a new meaning for wasaṭ

Muḥammad Zafaru'lláh Khán	an exalted people

The verse "**We placed you a middle ummah**" was revealed at the time when Muḥammad changed the direction of the Qiblah (the point to which Muslims turn to say the daily obligatory prayer). This change was very unpleasant for a group of followers and caused them to turn away from Islám. The change of the Qiblah was a test for Muslims of little faith, those who prefer their own desire to the will of God. These people, finding the action of the Prophet not agreeable to their own vain imagining and expectation, were filled with doubt and misgiving, and in the end, forfeited the precious gem of faith. Being "**the middle ummah**" is also such a test for Muslims of our time. Most Muslims do not like "**to be in the middle**". They glory in "**being the last**". Will Muslims of our time also, like their forefathers, prefer their own vain imagining and expectation to the command and wisdom of God? Will these Muslims—rather than accepting the Will of God—struggle to change the words of the Qur'án from their intended meaning, so that the results conform to their desire?

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* *Geographically, Arabia is in an intermediate position in the Old World, as was proved in history by the rapid expansion of Islam, north, south, west and east.* Yúsuf 'Alí, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'án*, fn. 143, p. 58.

Let us examine the purpose of this test. A test is to separate reflective and far-sighted people from the vainly imitating and short-sighted. In every age, the thought and imagination of religious leaders are of many kinds. Each leader has a verdict, and each scholar an intention and claim. What should be the course of action for other people in such a scuffle? As previously mentioned, a wise and clear-sighted Muslim is one who hears different sayings and chooses the best of them. This book is written for such Muslims. Its aim is to express and prove a Message that most Muslim leaders and learned have never accepted. The opposition from some of the leaders to the spread of this Message is so intense that they have imprisoned many of its supporters and have even murder some of them. Does the knowledge of various thoughts and beliefs cause you to be misled? Will knowledge of the Baha'i Faith harm you or other Muslims?

Those who think **wasaṭ** means "**just and moderate**" should consider the following questions:

- In recent years, just within Iraq, over 50,000 Muslims (men, women and children) have been murdered by other Muslims. Is this a sign of moderation or justice?
- Tens of thousands of other innocent Muslims (in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria) have been and continue to be murdered by Muslims. Is this the behavior to be expected from a **"moderate and temperate ummah"**?
- Is the prevalence of poverty in some Muslim countries, and the concentration of wealth in other Muslim countries a sign of moderation and justice?
- Is cruelty and oppression towards women and girls in many Muslim countries, especially in Afghanistan in recent years, a sign of moderation and justice?
- In the war between Iran and Iraq hundreds of thousands were murdered, and countless others were wounded or lost all their possessions. Is this a sign of moderation and justice?
- Is conflict and enmity between Sunnis and Shi'is over the course of many centuries, and the murder of the holy Imams a sign of moderation and justice?
- Is opposition to freedom of thought and speech in many Islamic countries a sign of moderation and justice?
- Is the execution of tens of thousands of free thinkers, and the imprisonment and torture of other freedom loving people in Iran a sign of a moderate and just ummah?
- Is the murder of 20,000 believers in the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, and the killing of hundreds of thousands of others in Iran, a sign of a moderate and just ummah?
- Is the killing of Christians in Sudan and the murder of more than one million Armenians in Ottoman Turkey a sign of justice?
- Is the conflict and enmity over the choice of a successor to Muḥammad a sign of moderation and justice?

Distortion of the word of God

Concealing or distorting the meaning of God's Word that is contrary to people's desire is not new.

> O people of the Book! Why clothe ye the truth with falsehood? Why wittingly hide the truth. Qur'án 3:71

> Those who conceal the proofs and guidance We have sent and presented in the Book for the people,God curses them; and those who curse curse them. Qur'án 2:159

The divines and scholars who change the meaning of khátam to "the last" and wasaṭ to "just and moderate", instead of conforming their thoughts to the Qur'án, try to conform the Qur'án to their way to thinking. Addressing such interpreters God states:

> They change the meaning and purpose of God's Word. Qur'án 4:46 (tr. 1)

> They displace God's Word from its true place. Qur'án 4:46 (tr. 2)

How is it possible to displace the Word of God from its intended location? Suppose there is a window in a room and without it the room will be in complete darkness. Imagine that someone covers this window with a curtain; then darkness of the room will allow him to commit whatever he desires. In every age, most religious leaders and scholars have tried to prevent God's light from reaching the people, and thus they have been able to greatly benefit from the people's ignorance. Think of the how the short-sighted leaders of Christianity, by resorting to a single verse "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6), have prevented, and continue to prevent, Christians from accepting Islám. What has been the secret of their success over so many centuries? It is the distortion or misinterpretation of a single verse from the utterances of His Holiness Jesus Christ.

The meaning of "except through Me" is similar to "except through the Light of God". People will never attain God except through that Light. His holiness Jesus was the Mirror of that Light in His own age. Later this same bright radiance shone from the "Muslim Mirror"; and, in our age, it shines from the "Mirror of Bahá'". The speaker is not the Mirror. God is the speaker, Who, in every age, appears in a new Mirror.

> *He Who is the Pre-Existent is come, that He may bestow everlasting life, and grant eternal preservation, and confer that which is conducive to true living.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O people of the earth! The Call of the All-Merciful hath been raised between earth and heaven, but the downcast are left in the tomb of negligence and oblivion.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Well is it with them that have broken the idols of vain imaginings by the power of God, and hearkening unto the Voice of the All-Merciful, have arisen from among the dead.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O friends of God! Incline your inner ears to the voice of the peerless and self-subsisting Lord, that He may deliver you from the bonds of entanglement and the depths of darkness and enable you to attain the eternal light.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

The Promise of the appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad is hidden and manifest throughout the Qur'án. Chapters 5 and 24 present many of these verses.

1 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 213.
2 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 168–169.
3 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 328. (prov. tr.)
4 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169.
5 Bahá'u'lláh in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81.
6 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 99. (prov. tr.)
7 Iqtidárát va Chand-Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 99. (prov. tr.)
8 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, para. 5.1, p. 71.

5
Appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad, part 2

The study of the Qur'anic verses regarding the appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad is of great importance:

- Belief in the conclusion of Revelation with the appearance of Muḥammad is not related only to the denial or acceptance of the Promised One of our time; this belief is an imaginary barrier constructed by Muslim religious leaders and placed in the path of the acceptance of all future Messengers of God.
- With the passage of time, this belief has developed such deep roots in the hearts and minds of believers that they consider it a self-evident truth, and pride themselves in following a religion that is the last and choicest Message from God. To give up such a profound belief and such a great honor is not easy.
- Belief in the cessation of Revelation from God, is a vast and solid prison that has confined the souls of the majority of Muslims. It has destroyed in them the love for reflection and curiosity. It forces them to deny, reject and even persecute any new Messenger even if He produces the most perfect and eloquent verses equal to one hundred times the size of the Qur'án after the latter's completed revelation.

The aim of this chapter is to disclose the secrets and show the tools and materials used—over the course of centuries and ages—by the talented schemers and engineers who have constructed this vast and strong prison of dogma.

What is the meaning of immá ya'tiyannakum?

This discussion is related to two very important verses in the Qur'án. The translation of verses 7:35 and 20:123 by Muslim scholars demonstrates how the ancestral beliefs and thoughts have caused them to conform the meaning and purpose of the divine verses to their own expectations and imagination. This is not a new occurrence; we can find many verses concerning this matter in the Qur'án, addressed to the followers of religions before Islám.

Qur'anic verses portending the appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad are many. Some of them are presented in several chapters of this book. God expresses this promise in verses 7:35 and 20:123 in a special way, with the uncommon combination of the following two words:

- **immá:** if, when, whenever
- **ya'tiyannakum:** "surely (without a doubt) will come (present tense emphatic verb with doubled "n")) to you"

The phrase **immá ya'tiyannakum** has been used thrice in the Qur'án (verses 2:38, 7:35 and 20:123). In each case, God issues a guarantee that His Messengers

will continue to appear. A comparison of the translation of these two Arabic words by translators of the Qur'án is instructive. Before making a comparison, it is necessary to see the verses and understand their context:

Qur'án 2:38	Muḥammad Asad: ... **there shall**, none the less, **most certainly come unto you** guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.
	Mawlana Muḥammad 'Alí: ... **Surely there will come to you** a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.
Qur'án 7:35	Muḥammad Asad: ... **Whenever there come unto you** apostles of your own, conveying My messages unto you, then all who are conscious of Me and live righteously—no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve
	Mawlana Muḥammad 'Alí: ... **if** messengers **come to you** from among you relating to you My messages, then whosoever guards against evil and acts aright—they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.
Qur'án 20:123	Muḥammad Asad: ... None the less, **there shall most certainly come unto you** guidance from Me: and he who follows My guidance will not go astray, and neither will he be unhappy
	Mawlana Muḥammad 'Alí: ... So **there will surely come to you** guidance from Me; then whoever follows My guidance, he will not go astray nor be unhappy.

The influence of translators' expectations

The previous examples demonstrate that translators of the Qur'án have different interpretations of **immá ya'tiyannakum;** and their choice depends on whom God is addressing. In verses 2:38 and 20:123, God's Promise is made to **Adam and his progeny** Here, most of the translators use emphatic expressions such as "**surely**", "certainly" or "Henceforth there shall come ...". However, in verse 7:35, when the same promise of God is addressed to the Muslims, many translators choose "**if**", "when" or "**whenever**" with no emphatic assurance, as if God's words were only spoken hypothetically and not given as a promise.

It is clear that God's Promise to Adam is acceptable to Muslims; the appearance of the Prophet of Islám is itself a sign of the fulfillment of that Promise. However, when Muslims are faced with the same Promise given to Muḥammad, they encounter a great difficulty. The appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad is contrary to their traditional beliefs. When translating the Promise of God to Muḥammad, the translators of the Qur'án feel obligated to respect those well-established dogmas of finality. How would they conform the meaning of the Promise to their beliefs? Instead of adding "**surely**" or "**of course**", they use "**if**", "**when**" or "**whenever**" with no such words of assurance. The difference between "**surely** Messengers will come" and "**if** Messengers come" is great. The word "**if**" does not much attract the attention of readers.

Using conditional words such as "if", "when", "whenever", the translators remove the certainty from the verse's meaning. How is it possible for Muḥammad to be the last of the Messengers while, at the same time, God emphatically promises the certainty of a future Messenger.

The two translators—Muḥammad Asad and Mawlana Muḥammad 'Alí—mentioned above are not exceptions. It is appropriate to consider three other samples of such translations:

Shakir	... if there come to you messengers	7:35
	So there will **surely** come to you guidance	20:123
Asad-ur-Raḥmán & 'Abdu'l-Mannán	Whenever there comes to you	7:35
	There will surely come to you	20:123
Yúsuf 'Alí	Whenever there come to you Messengers	7:35
	... if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me	20:123

Note that in verse 7:35—addressed to the Muslims—Yúsuf 'Alí translates the phrase **immá ya'tiyannakum** simply as "**Whenever** there come to you ..." with no emphasis, However, in his translation of exactly the same phrase in verses 20:123 (and 2:38)—addressed to Adam and his progeny—Yúsuf 'Alí adds the emphatic "**as is sure**" to the apparently hypothetical "**if**", which is more accurate. Let us see why. A subtle literary point needs to be explained regarding the use of **immá ya'tiyannakum** in these three verses. It is clear that combining the two words "**immá**" and "**ya'tiyannakum**" is not common, since they appear to contradict each other. **Immá** points to the possibility of something; while **ya'tiyannakum** points to its certainty. It is not common to say "If certainly I will come to your home." We use **immá** when we intend to give hope: "It is possible that I will come to your home". We use **ya'tiyannakum** when our purpose is to make a commitment. It is not reasonable for an event to be simultaneously conditional as well as certain,

However, in the context of God's revelation, reflecting solely on the use of **immá** resolves the apparent dilemma. We know that in human affairs there are doubts and hesitations, which are expressed by the use of the word "if". Is there also an "if" in God's affairs? The use of "if" is only reasonable when humans are involved. For example, we could say "If people do not accept the Promised One of God, their fate is in jeopardy." However, the use of "**if**" regarding the dispatching of the Messengers for the guidance of the people, which is solely in God's hands, is not reasonable. The sending of Messengers relies solely on God's command and wisdom, and is not related to man's desire or will. The word "if" has no place in the Divine world. For this reason, some impartial translators have not included the word "if" in translation. Among them is Rodwell:

> O children of Adam! There shall come to you Apostles (Messengers) from among yourselves. Qur'án 7:35

With two special words, God fulfilled His Covenant and commitment to the nations that lived after Adam, by sending Messengers such as Muḥammad. Is it reasonable to imagine that the meaning of the same two words, i.e. **immá** and

ya'tiyannakum, in reference to the same commitment after the appearance of Muḥammad, suddenly changed?

The necessity of renewing religion

In every age, God's Messenger speaks according to our capacities and needs.

> *Say: O people! These words are being uttered in due measure, that the newly born may thrive and the tender shoot flourish. Milk should be given in suitable proportion, that the children of the world may attain to the station of maturity and abide in the court of oneness.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

The verses of the Qur'án clarify the purpose and meaning of each other. The more we study that heavenly Book, the clearer the major Plan of God becomes to us. The following blessed verse demonstrates why there is a need for the appearance of new Messengers:

> Surely, We sent Messengers before you .... For every age [period], there is a Book. God will abrogate, or confirm, whatever [Command or Law] He desires. The Source of all Books is with Him. Qur'án 13:38–39

The above verses confirm each other. If for each ummah a Messenger and a certain time period has been appointed, when that period comes to an end, and a new age begins, it is necessary for a new Book to come from God.

The sending of a new Book is a proof of the necessity of changes in former laws and commandments. Otherwise, why is there a need for a new Book and a new Message? The Heavenly Teacher, who is the fountainhead of Books, will leave unchanged whatever is still valid and abrogate whatever is no longer needed. This matter is completely according to reason and wisdom.

Even if no other reference about this topic could be found in the Qur'án, the above verses alone would have been sufficient to discover the Truth. The following points can be made about verses 13: 38–39:

- The former Messengers are mentioned first so that God's past proceedings are made clear: "***Surely We sent Messengers before you***".
- Then God's overall custom and method is clearly stated. Since the words **"every"**, **"age"** and **"Book"** all have specific meanings. The **"every"** (all) signifies that there is no exception to this rule; the **"age"** (period) means a limited, and not an unlimited, time. **"Book"** is a heavenly Book. Therefore, **"for every age there is a Book."**
- Later, God's power is discussed; meaning God confirms or modifies the laws and commandments of every heavenly Book, since He is the source of all heavenly Books. "***God will abrogate or confirm what He desires***". Could the matter be stated any more clearly than this?

In addition to the verses of God, experiential and historical reasons also confirm the necessity for each religion to be limited to a specific term, and for the appearance of new religions. The Prophet of Islam changed even some of the commandments of the Qur'an during His 23-year Apostleship.

> We do not abrogate a verse ... unless We reveal a better one, or one similar to it.
> Qur'án 2:106

How can the laws of the Qur'án suffice the world for hundreds or thousands of millions of years and not need any amendment? Even during our age, Islamic countries are no longer able to enforce all of the laws of the Qur'án. God's eternal custom and method has been the sending of Messengers to various peoples and ummahs of the world. Why would this way suddenly end at a particular time and with a particular Messenger?

> Never will there be any change in God's way. Qur'án 48:23, 33:62

'Abdu'l-Bahá has repeatedly explained this matter:

> *From the days of Adam until today, the religions of God have been made manifest, one following the other, and each one of them fulfilled its due function, revived mankind, and provided education and enlightenment. They freed the people from the darkness of the world of nature and ushered them into the brightness of the Kingdom. As each succeeding Faith and Law became revealed it remained for some centuries a richly fruitful tree and to it was committed the happiness of humankind. However, as the centuries rolled by, it aged, it flourished no more and put forth no fruit, wherefore was it then made young again.*
>
> *The religion of God is one religion, but it must ever be renewed ....*
>
> *Note thou carefully that in this world of being, all things must ever be made new. Look at the material world about thee, see how it hath now been renewed. The thoughts have changed, the ways of life have been revised, the sciences and arts show a new vigour, discoveries and inventions are new, perceptions are new. How then could such a vital power as religion—the guarantor of mankind's great advances, the very means of attaining everlasting life, the fosterer of infinite excellence, the light of both worlds—not be made new? This would be incompatible with the grace and loving-kindness of the Lord.*[2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá
>
> *O long-standing friend! You hast asked some questions. The first question was as followeth: Why hath the religion of the Prophets of God changed? The world of existence may be likened to the human body which doth not stay in a single state, but moveth from one state to another, and from one condition to another; varying illnesses and ailments appear. For this reason, the wise and knowing Physician will change the remedy and modify the treatment ... and this change is pure wisdom, as the primary purpose is good health and well-being .... However, there hath not been nor will ever be any changes in the foundation of the religion of God. For example, a praiseworthy character, laudable virtues, the way of the pure, and the conduct of the magnanimous and the righteous are amongst the essential requirements of the religion of God. This hath not changed nor will it ever change.*[3] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The unity of the Messengers of God

The words separation, preference and distinction are not used in the Kingdom of God. In God's Revelation, the rising and setting of the Messengers has been likened to the rising and setting of the sun:

> *If the sun riseth a hundred thousand times, it is and will always be the same sun.*[4]
> The Báb

If we say, Muḥammad is the "First Prophet", we have spoken the truth; if we say, He is the "Last Prophet", we have also spoken the truth. If we say, He is the "Middle Prophet", we have spoken the truth; if we say, He is all the Prophets we have also spoken the truth.

> *I am all the Prophets.*[5]

God addressing the Messengers:

> *I have appointed Thee to be the Beginning and the End, the Seen and the Hidden. Verily We are the All-Knowing.*[6] The Báb

> *I swear by God! This is the One Who appeared once in the name of the Spirit* [Jesus], *then in the name of the Beloved* [Muḥammad]; *then in the name of 'Alí* [the Báb], *then in this name* [Bahá'u'lláh].[7] Bahá'u'lláh

> *God, the True One, saith: Know, verily, He is the One Who appeared before and will appear in the future. Whosoever maketh a distinction between Him and the One Who hath appeared before, or shall appear in the future, hath blasphemed against God and His signs* [verses].[8] Bahá'u'lláh

His Holiness, the Báb, makes the following statement about His unity with Bahá'u'lláh:

> *... indeed He is I and I am He.*[9] The Báb

The Prophets of God, even though they have appeared with different names, all have one religion and invite us to one Faith. The Qur'án calls that eternal Faith "Islám".

> Those to whom We sent the Book before this [Jews and Christians] believe in it [the Qur'án], and when the verses are recited to them, they say "we believe in it [this Book]; surely, it is the truth and from our Lord; before [the revelation of the Qur'án] we were Muslims". Qur'án 28:52–53

> *... the Revelation of God may be likened to the sun. No matter how innumerable its risings, there is but one sun, and upon it depends the life of all things.*[10] The Báb

> And who can have a better religion than the one who submits his face to God [is a Muslim], has a praiseworthy conduct, and follows the Faith of Abraham. Qur'án 4:125

> *The foundation of God's religions is one ... their difference is over names; if names are removed all shall see that their aim is one, and every religion ... is perfect for its age.*[11] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

According to God's Words, the Apostle of God, Muḥammad, was not only "the Last", He was also "the First"; to be "the First" and "the Last" is a greater station than just being "the Last". All the Messengers of God have had and will always have these two stations. They are all both "the First" and "the Last". The fact that they all share this attribute does not lower its station. Therefore, the Bahá'í Faith elevates the rank of the Prophet of Islám above what the Muslims ascribe to Him. The Apostle of God was not only "the Beginning" of the Messengers but also "the End" of Them. Every Messenger of God Who appears will have both these stations, for the Chosen Ones of God are all the Light of one God.

> Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Revelation 22:12–13

> *And were they all to proclaim: "I am the Seal of the Prophets," they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

> *... by "first" is meant no other than the "last" and by "last" no other than the "first."*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

> *It is this Primal Will which appeareth resplendent in every Prophet and speaketh forth in every revealed Book. It knoweth no beginning, inasmuch as the First deriveth its firstness from It; and knoweth no end, for the Last oweth its lastness unto It.*[14] The Báb

> *He is the End from Whom the Beginning is manifest, and He is the Last from Whom the First is discerned. And He is ... the manifestation of the words: "He is the First and the Last, the Seen and the Hidden."*[15] Bahá'u'lláh

> He is the First and the Last, the Seen and the Hidden. Qur'án 57:3

The following words of the Báb is true about God and also about His Chosen Ones:

> *He is the First while being the Last, and He is the Hidden while being Manifest. He is mentioned by every name, while He is unmentionable by any name.*[16] The Báb

The poet, Mawláná Jalál ad-Dín Muḥammad Rúmí, testifies to this truth:

> The name Ahmad belongeth to all Prophets
> When the hundredth is come, ninetieth is also with us

The most important lesson of history

Muslim leaders have constructed a great foundation from a vague word, khátam, and upon it have raised a magnificent castle. During the course of centuries, millions of believers have benefitted greatly from this beautiful castle, and have taken pride in their religion "being the last", while ignoring many clear verses contrary to this assumption. In truth, they should be building their citadel on the foundations of all those clear verses.

In a similar way, during the course of many centuries, Christian clergy have also prevented, and continue to prevent, hundreds of millions of Christians from recognizing and believing in Islám by distorting the meaning of one verse,. If that one verse did not exist in their heavenly Book, they would have found another verse to reject Islám, and to safeguard their own interests. The followers of all religions consider their own Faith as the last one, and thus have been subjected to tests:

> *The mystery of this theme hath, in this Dispensation, been a sore test unto all mankind.*[17] Bahá'u'lláh

It is worthwhile to reflect on this question: Is it reasonable to trust our eternal destiny to the symbolic meaning of one word, **"seal"**, while ignoring such a large number of verses that bring us the glad-tidings of the appearance of

other Messengers? Could we trust the interpretation or explanation of religious scholars and leaders? They disagree with one another on even minor matters of religious law, how much more do they disagree in understanding the mysteries of the heavenly Scriptures. Only God is aware of the mysteries enshrined in His own words, and, in each age, clarifies the difficulties existing in the scriptures of former Revelations:

> This Qur'án ... is the explanation of the Books from the Lord of the worlds; no doubt is therein. Qur'án 10:37

> The Truth hath indeed come to thee from your Lord; then never be of those who doubt. Qur'án 10:94

> I follow naught but what is revealed unto me. . Qur'án 10:15

> *O people! These are the verses of God revealed to Me, in Truth .... By God! They are not from Me, but from the Almighty Beloved Lord of Wisdom.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

People have always distorted the meaning of the Word of God according to their own desires, and will continue to do so:

> But the wrong-doers changed [the purpose of] the Word [of God] from what was said to them. So, for this wrongdoing, We sent onto them a calamity from heaven. Qur'án 7:162

> Whatever was beyond their knowledge [understanding] they have considered falsehood, even before its explanation has been revealed to them. In the same way, those gone before them denied the truth. Then, see what the fate of the unjust was. Qur'án 10:39

Former ummahs, such as the Jews and Christians, did not understand the mysteries of their scriptures, and for this reason refused to accept Islám. Are Muslims of our time any different? Are they better informed of the mysteries of God's Words? Are Muslim scholars and leaders more virtuous (God-fearing) than the scholars and leaders of former religions?

> Do they expect anything other than what occurred in former times? Say! Wait then, I too will wait with you. Qur'án 10:102

> Surely you (Muslims) too will follow, step by step, in the ways of those gone before you.[19] Muḥammad

> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:37

> For in the days before the flood, people were eating, and drinking, marrying, and ... up to the day Noah entered the ark .... This is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.[20] Matthew 24:38–39

> There will be terrible times in the last days ... (people) having a form of godliness but denying its power. 2 Timothy 3:1–5

How bewildering is that intense attachment and dependence upon the old, worn-out body of an ummah whose life has ended, which prevents people from recognizing, at the prescribed time, the new Plan of God! Instead of accepting, with heart and soul, the Will of the Almighty God and advancing, they resist it as hard as they can. In every age, the denial of the "end of an ummah" and intense

resistance to accepting this eternal and unchangeable truth, has been the cause of the denial of God's Messengers.

> *Never hath God Manifested Himself in ways that the people imagined; but hath revealed Himself in ways contrary to that which the people possess.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

> *These people have imagined that the flow of God's all-encompassing grace and plenteous mercies, the cessation of which no mind can contemplate, has been halted.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

God calls the Qur'án a "clear" Book. If He wanted to teach us that Islám is "the last religion", why, in such a foundational topic, He did not use **khátim,** which has a clear and definite meaning (the one who concludes, the end)?

Why do so many translators of the Qur'án try to hide the meaning of khátam from people? Why do they fail to correctly translate a word on which the destiny of Muslims depends? Why do they refuse to tell readers of the Qur'án the true meaning of a word for which they have made the foundation of Islam? Why do they confine themselves to mentioning only the original Arabic word, which may not be understood? Why, instead of writing, **"Muḥammad is the Seal of the Prophets"** (in English), they write **"Muḥammad is the Khátam of the Prophets"**? They well know that their uninformed Persian readers will connect khátam to the Persian **khátimih** ("end"). In meaning, there is a great difference between **khátam** and **khátim**; one is a **"seal"**, the other **"end"**. How is **"seal"** one with **"Last"**?

One can find the purpose of God not only from what is in the Qur'án, but also from what is not in the Qur'án. Why has God not clearly (explicitly) confirmed such an inaccurate assumption anywhere in this "clear" Book? Many facts have been repeated in this glorious Book. Why then has God not revealed a verse that stated: "O believers! Do not expect any Messengers after Muḥammad?" Why have the believers not asked such questions?

We must not treat the problem of "**Khátam an-Nabiyyín**" lightly. For if we do not correctly comprehend with a clear conscience the intent of the Qur'án, then without any thought or discussion we will consider all future Messengers, one by one, to be false ones; and we will insult, reject and persecute them all, even as our ancestors did. Therefore, O believers! Do not trivialize this problem, and do not ignore the many verses in the Qur'án that bring the glad-tidings of the appearance of other Messengers:

> *Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on*

the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.[23] Bahá'u'lláh

Those who have been debarred from the shores of the Ocean of the knowledge of the Merciful have regarded their own knowledge as a criterion for the recognition of the one true God. They are therefore deprived of the waters of the River of Inner Meaning. Indeed, in every nation, today, those bent on their own proofs and reasons are still waiting .... And this is the state of the souls who all, have desired knowledge.[24] Bahá'u'lláh

From the discussions of this and chapters 3 and 4, we conclude: First, the basic meaning of **Khátam an-Nabiyyín** is not the "last" Prophet. Secondly, the glorious Qur'án has emphatically and repeatedly promised the people of the world the coming of future Messengers after the Prophet of Islám. In addition, the renewal of religion is in harmony with God's wisdom and in accord with reason and the judgement of man. It is greatly astonishing that khátam, with its many and diverse meanings, in a sentence unrelated to being last, has become the foundation of a belief for the majority of Muslims. Whereas, so many verses speak with perfect clarity of the end of the age, the period (duration) of Islám, and the appearance of new Messengers—all this has been forgotten.

Will you believe in a part of the Book and reject other parts? Then what is the punishment for someone who believes in this way except suffering in this worldly life? And also, in the Day of Judgement such people will face the severest punishment. God is not unaware of their actions. Qur'án 2:85

Say: If your rules and principles be founded on justice, why is it, then, that ye follow those which accord with your corrupt inclinations and reject such as conflict with your desires?[25] Bahá'u'lláh

Power and influence of khátam over the fate of Islám

Before concluding this chapter, it is worthwhile to compare the meaning of khátam ("seal")—which Muslim scholars have made the foundation of Islám and used it to erect a large structure—with the many Qur'anic verses that point to the appearance of other Messengers:

Why Muḥammad is the last

Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. Qur'án 33:40

Why Muḥammad is not the last

For every ummah a Warner is sent.	Qur'án 35:24
For every age [or period] there is a Book.	Qur'án 13:38–39
For every ummah [there is] a Messenger.	Qur'án 10:47
For every ummah a fixed time is set.	Qur'án 7:34
And thus We made you [Muslims] a middle ummah.	Qur'án 2:143
If Messengers come to you [as they surely will]....	Qur'án 7:35
... and you will never find any change in God's way.	Qur'án 33:62, 48:23

Restatement of the above verses

1. It has been God's way to send Messengers in the past.
2. God's way has been to never leave an ummah without a Warner.
3. God's way is to send a Messenger to every ummah,
4. God's way is to send a Book for each Age.
5. God's way or tradition (method) will never change.
6. God emphatically promises that He will surely send Messengers in the future.

"Spiritual death" of ummahs necessitates future Messengers

The fact that Islám is not the last religion and the Messenger of Islám is not the last Messenger is one of the most obvious truths in the glorious Qur'án. In concluding this discussion, it is worthwhile to use common logical reasoning based on the Qur'án:

1. An "Ummah" consists of a group of people to whom God sends a Guide.
2. The life of every ummah will end.
3. Muslims are an ummah.
4. Therefore, the life (spiritual life) of the Muslim ummah will end.

****

> Is it not that whenever a Messenger came to you with what was contrary to your selfish desires, you became haughty; some you accused of falsehood and others you murdered? Qur'án 2:87

> *O peoples of the earth! I swear by your Lord! Ye shall act as former generations have acted. Warn ye, then, yourselves of the terrible, the most grievous vengeance of God. For God is, verily, potent over all things.*[26] The Báb

> *Say! You speak as the former generations spoke at the time of the Apostle of God.*[27] Bahá'u'lláh

> Every time a Messenger came to a people, they accused him of falsehood. Qur'án 23:44

> That which hath been revealed to thee from thy Lord is the Truth; but most men believe not. Qur'án 13:1

> *... the people are sunk in heedlessness.*[28] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say! By God! He hath chosen for Himself naught but misfortune, that He may draw you nigh unto the Supreme Horizon. To this testify all things, but most people are among the heedless.*[29] Bahá'u'lláh

The sending of Messengers is God's greatest gift and blessing to His servants. Why are people reluctant to accept this gift? Instead of hastening, with enthusiasm and eagerness, to accept it, why do they run away?

> Indeed, God conferred a great favor upon the believers when He chose, from among them, a Messenger that He may recite to them His verses, purify them and teach them the Book and wisdom, whereas before this, they were in clear error. Qur'án 3:164

The religion of God is for love and unity, not for enmity and separation:

> *Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord.*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 10–11.
2 *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 52 (no. 23)
3 Yárán-i-Pársí, pp. 261–263. (prov. tr.)
4 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 154.
5 Revealed by Muḥammad, according to *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 153.
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 159.
7 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 196. (prov. tr.)
8 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 272. (prov. tr.)
9 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 168.
10 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 105.
11 Payám-i-Malikút, p. 155 and 166. (prov. tr.)
12 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 179.
13 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 163.
14 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 126.
15 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 306. (prov. tr.)
16 The Persian Bayan, p. 10. (prov. tr.)
17 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 162.
18 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 4, pp. 79–80.
19 www.al-yemen.org/vb/archive/index.php/t-353419.html & www.rekaaz.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-42.html & other sources
20 Holy Bible, New International Version
21 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 109. (prov. tr.)
22 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 137.
23 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68.
24 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 289. (prov. tr.)
25 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 124 (no LXV)
26 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 72.
27 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 294. (prov. tr.)
28 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 40.
29 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 183. (prov. tr.)
30 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 222.

Part 3
Solving the great puzzle of the Qur'án

This part contains two chapters regarding the date of the end of the age of Islám and the beginning of the appearance of a new faith of God:

6. **A hidden promise is suddenly fulfilled**
7. **The end of an age and the fulfillment of God's** promise

> They say: When will this Promise be fulfilled? — Qur'án 21:38
>
> *All the heavenly Books herald this Most Great Revelation.*[1] — Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *The Promised One of all the nations of the world hath become apparent and manifest!*[2] — 'Abdu'l-Bahá
>
> *The Divine Messenger, Who speaketh naught but the truth, hath announced unto you the coming of the Best-Beloved. Behold, He is now come. Wherefore are ye downcast and dejected?*[3] — Bahá'u'lláh

1 Safíniy-i-'Irfán, p. 31. (prov. tr.)
2 *Tablets of Abdul Baha Abbas*, vol. III, p. 626.
3 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168 (no LXXXV)

6
A hidden promise is suddenly fulfilled

> O Lord! Thou art He Who gathereth together the people in a Day about which there is no doubt. Surely God will not breach His Promise. Qur'án 3:9

> Do not think that God will break His Promise. Qur'án 14:47

> They say: When will this "Promise" come to pass? ... Will you then believe after it hath been fulfilled? [Will the people become believers after the Promise hath been fulfilled?]. They will ask you: Is He [the Promised One] True? Say! Yea, by My Lord! Surely, He is the Truth, and you cannot hinder (frustrate) Him .... Is not God's Promise true? [Surely it is true] Yet most of the people know not. Qur'án 10:48, 51, 53, 55

> *By the Lord of heaven and earth! He is the Truth from Our presence.*[1] The Báb

> *This is the Path of God ....*[2] The Báb

People never imagined that they would hear the news of a young merchant claiming to be the Qá'im (the Promised One of Islám). Therefore, at first the Promised One called Himself the Báb, (meaning the Gate to the Promised One):

> *Observe! In the beginning of the Cause, His Holiness revealed Himself as the Gate. For in those days, the birds of men's hearts were unable to soar beyond this station.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh then explains that the station of "the Gate" (the Báb) and infinitely higher stations may be created solely through a nod from Him:

> *All created things lamented when He ascribed unto Himself this station* [the Báb]; *more exalted stations than this are created with a Word of His mouth or a motion of His finger.*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

Once people had the capacity to hear it, the Báb announced the appearance of the Promised Qá'im:

> *The Qá'im hath appeared by the leave of His Lord. This is but an evidence of the bounty which God hath vouchsafed unto thee. He is the Qá'im Whose Day all are awaiting and Whose advent hath been promised.*[5] The Báb

> *Say! He is the Promised Mahdí Whose advent hath been foretold in the Mother Book* (the Qur'án).[6] The Báb

According to God's way and method each Messenger gives the glad-tidings of the appearance of the Messenger to come after Him:

> The Messenger, the Bringer of News, ... Whom they find mentioned in their own scriptures, the Torah and the Evangel. Qur'án 7:157

> Its [the Qur'án's] description is in the Books of former generations. Qur'án 26:196

> He will show you His signs, and you will recognize them. Qur'án 27:93

God desires us to pray for the fulfillment of His Promises and that we would recognize His Chosen Ones:

> O Lord! We have heard the Call of the One calling [the people] to "faith" [and telling them] Believe in your Lord! ... [they respond] O Lord! Grant us what You promised us through Your Messengers ... their Lord granted their request.
> Qur'án 3:193–195

What is the Promise of God whose fulfillment former Messengers said we must pray for? Who is calling the people to believe in the fulfillment of this Promise? Why does the Caller ask the people to believe in their Lord? These points demonstrate that with the passing of time people lose their faith in both God and religion, and they must lift up their hands in prayer to regain this gift.

All heavenly Books have promised their followers the appearance of a Promised One for our age:

> In that future time, Súshiáns [Saöshyánt, the Promised One of Zoroastrians] will appear. He will perfect the purity and freshness of the world, and will uproot the wickedness and torment of the Evil One. Zamyád-Yasht, no. 89

In the Book of Dínkard, Ahúrá-Mazdá (God), addressing Zoroaster, says:

> I will appoint a Messenger from among your children.[7]

Addressing the Zoroastrians:

> *The glad-tidings given by His Holiness the Messenger of the Messengers** [Zoroaster] *have all been fulfilled. Húshídar Máh Bámí is the Exalted One* [the Báb]. *Sháh-Bahrám is His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. But I am 'Abdu'l-Bahá, meaning the powerless servant of Bahá'.*[8] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

> *The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.*[9] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is the Day mentioned in all the Holy Scriptures and Books, whose advent the Prophets and Messengers of God fortod and promised to the people.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

Through their verses, the Bab and Baha'u'llah have borne witness to the fulfillment of the "Promise" of God:

> *The Promise hath been fulfilled and the Promised One hath appeared. Blessed is he who hearkeneth to the Call and heedeth his Lord.*[11] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: O My Servants! The Guide is come. Hasten unto Him. The Peerless Seer hath arrived, showing the straight Path. It beseemeth him who hearkeneth to say, with his inner tongue: O my Lord! Thy Call hath revived the world and hath bestowed life upon it. My face is turning to Thee and my soul is eager to meet Thee .... The Lord of the world is come, His Way is unlike other ways, and His Words unlike other words. Hearken and come forth. This blessed Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer. This is the Word of God.*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

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* This title is a sign of 'Abdu'l-Baha's love and respect for Zoroaster.

God testifieth that there is no other God but Him, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting; and this, verily, is the true Qá'im Whose appearance ye have been promised.[14]
The Báb

Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence? These are the appointed days which ye have been yearningly awaiting in the past—the days of the advent of divine justice. Render ye thanks unto God, O ye concourse of believers.[15]
The Báb

VERILY I am God, no God is there but Me, and aught except Me is but My creation. Say, worship Me then, O ye, My creatures.

I have called Thee into being, have nurtured Thee, protected Thee, loved Thee, raised Thee up and have graciously chosen Thee to be the manifestation of Mine Own Self, that Thou mayest recite My verses as ordained by Me, and may summon whomsoever I have created unto My Religion which is none other than this glorious and exalted Path.

I have fashioned all created things for Thy sake, and I have, by virtue of My Will, set Thee sovereign Ruler over all mankind ....

In truth I have created Thee through Thyself, then at My Own behest I have fashioned all things through the creative power of Thy Word. We are All-Powerful. I have appointed Thee to be the Beginning and the End, the Seen and the Hidden. Verily We are the All-Knowing.[16]
The Báb

Whosoever obeyeth God and His Word hath attained the Truth and great grace and bounty, and whosoever turneth away from God and His Gate hath, verily, erred, how great an error, how great a remoteness.[17]
The Báb

The promise hath been fulfilled and the Promised One hath appeared. Happy is the one who hath hearkened to the Call and heedeth his Lord, and woe betide the one who hath erred and doubted.[18]
Bahá'u'lláh

Verily I am the 'Gate of God' and I give you to drink, by the leave of God, the sovereign Truth, of the crystal-pure waters of His Revelation which are gushing out from the incorruptible Fountain situate upon the Holy Mount.[19]
The Báb

Solving the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án begins with this chapter. The aim of the first two parts of this book was to remove the barrier to the Puzzle. The goal of the rest of this book is to solve the Puzzle. To succeed in this great goal, you need to delay any final judgement until you have seen all the pieces of the Puzzle, and pondered and recognized their relationship. Any judgement made before seeing the complete picture of the Puzzle, which will be apparent by the end of this book, will not be credible.

Our search for the promised new Faith is very similar to a journey. Suppose you are searching for a garden full of delicious fruits. At the beginning of the journey the view of the garden is hidden from your sight. However, eventually an image of it appears before your eyes; your movement step by step toward the goal makes the reality of the existence of the garden clearer. Once you reach

the garden and taste of its fruits, no power on earth can create any doubt or misgiving in your mind or spirit. Recognition of the new Faith of God and attainment of belief in it happens in the same way; such a degree of faith and certitude is not easily achieved; no gift can compare, in value and station, with the gift of faith and the love of God. Is it fair for such a heavenly bounty and matchless gift to be given to anyone who merely wishes for it?

It was only after the passing of nearly 13 centuries—that is, from the beginning of Islám to the time of the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith—that two remarkable Muslim scholars—Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í and Siyyid Kázim Rashtí—understood the mystery of the Qur'án. Through God's Command and Wisdom, the great Puzzle of the Qur'án was hidden in such a way that Muslim divines and thinkers living through those long years did not even become aware of its existence, much less were they able to solve it.

Solving this Puzzle requires intensive search and great perseverance. In order to succeed in this great goal, you should read, several times, the Qur'anic verses used in this book, and ponder and reflect upon their meaning. It is God's Will that only those who love the Truth, and strive with heart and soul, should discover the Path of God. Others, according to God's Promise, are deprived of such an awareness and the unique bounty of this divine gift:

> We shall guide to Our Path those who strive for Us. Qur'án 29:69
>
> They ask you: When will the Hour come? Qur'án 7:187
>
> Surely the Hour shall come. My plan is to keep it secret so that every soul receives its reward according to its striving. Qur'án 20:15

In part 2, some Qur'anic verses were cited in which the All-Knowing God had warned His servants of the eventual end of the age of Islam, promising the appearance of future Messengers. Let us now see if there are other verses that confirm this Promise. Are there also verses that set dates for the end of the age of Islám and for the appearance of the new Faith?

People have always been interested in predictions about the future, and prophecies about the promised Messiah who would usher in a 'Golden Age' of peace and prosperity. When asked when this would be, the Messengers have provided two types of answers. 1) Only God is aware of that time. You must always be prepared, awake and searching, because that time will come suddenly without your being aware of it. 2. An exact year for the appearance of the Promise One was given in the form of an allegory or puzzle.

There are reasons for the hiding of the time of the appearance; for example, if the time of the fulfillment were known in advance, the fools and imposters falsely would claim Prophethood at that-time; in that case, God's prophecy regarding the Hour would be undermined.

In this section, examples of both types of response from the Prophets will be examined. It is fitting to begin this examination with responses regarding the Promise without specifying the time of its fulfillment, and end with those that specify the time of the fulfillment of the Promise.

The heavenly Scriptures often speak of a Promise or News that the people have been awaiting from the beginning of time, and continue to await:

> Oh Lord! Grant us that which you promised us through your Messengers. Qur'án 3:194

Christian Scriptures also repeatedly refer to this Promise and News:

> ... and that he may send the Christ, who have been appointed for you even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. Acts of the Apostles 3:20–21

This truth has also been confirmed in the Writings of the Báb:

> *With each and every Prophet Whom We have sent down in the past, We have established a separate Covenant concerning the Remembrance of God* and His Day.*[20] The Báb

> And when We covenanted with the Prophets, and with Thee [Muḥammad], and with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary—We took a strong covenant from them—so that God may test the truthfulness of the truthful ; but for the deniers [of this covenant] a great penalty is prepared. Qur'án 33:7–8

This Promise and this Covenant are the foremost of all God's promises and the most joyous of them all. These Glad-tidings are of such great importance that in the Qur'án it has been called "the Great Announcement" or "the Great News":

> Concerning what are they questioning each other? About the "Great Announcement", concerning which they disagree. It is not so [as they think]; soon they will know. Qur'án 78:1–5

> *This is the Most Great Announcement and the Great Cause. Appreciate the value thereof, and be fair concerning that which is revealed .... Make every effort, then, while there is yet time and the Cause is manifest, that ye withhold not yourselves therefrom.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following verse, God swears by this great day—the Day of the Appearance of the Promise:

> By the Promised Day .... Qur'án 85:2

Since people always have doubts and misgivings, the kind Lord assures the expectants not to have any doubts concerning the fulfillment of the Promise:

> Be patient! Surely God's Promise is true. Qur'án 30:60

> Surely God's Promise is true. Qur'án 31:33

> O people! Surely God's Promise is true. Qur'án 35:5

> In that Day, God will bestow upon them their religion, the Truth. Qur'án 24:25

> Surely that which you had been promised is the Truth. Qur'án 51:5

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* "The Remembrance", "the Most Great Remembrance", and "the Greater Remembrance" are all titles of the Bab.

Surely that which you have been promised will come to pass. Qur'án 77:7

When the "Event" is come to pass, its occurrence will be undeniable. Qur'án 56:1–2

On that Day the Event shall come to pass. Qur'án 69:15

Say: The aforementioned "Event" hath, in this Day, come to pass.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

Since God's Messengers are all assisted by the same Source and Their Words are all from God, then there are great similarities in terminologies and the words They use. Comparing utterances of the Chosen Ones of God will help you become familiar with the symbolic terms used in the Puzzle of the Qur'án and its hidden mystery. This should broaden your perspective. Note the similarities between the following utterances by Christ and Muḥammad:

The Qur'án	The Bible
They will ask Thee concerning the Hour: When will be its appointed time? Say: Its knowledge is with God ... it will come upon you suddenly. Qur'án 7:187	At that time men will see the Son of Man coming .... No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father .... Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come .... If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. Mark 13:26–36

Common words and signs in the Bible and the Qur'án

The Qur'án	The Bible
The Hour	The Hour
Its knowledge is with God	Only the Father knows of it
Sudden	Sudden

Additional words and signs in the Bible

- Christ does not know
- Angels do not know
- You do not know
- Be awake

The harmony and similarity between the utterances of these two Messengers of God is evident. Note also the following two statements—both warn people of the "torment" and "punishment" to come. In the Qur'anic verse the word "torment" accompanies "the Hour", "suddenly" and "without their [the people's] knowledge". In the Biblical verse the word "punishment" accompanies "the Promise":

The Qur'án	The Bible
Do they not think that God's veil of torment will envelope them or that the Hour will, suddenly and without their knowledge, come to pass? Qur'án 12:107	For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. Luke 21:22

Common words and signs in the Bible and the Qur'án

The Qur'án	The Bible
Torment	Punishment
The Hour	Time of the fulfillment of the Promise

Additional signs in the Qur'án

- Do you feel secure?
- Do you think you can avoid God's chastisement?

The conclusion from the above verses is that there is an "Event" or a "Promise", the true character of which is unknown to people. The exact timing of this event is even hidden from the Messengers of God .

Question: Why does the Plan remain hidden?

First reason: Testing and recognition of the believers.

> Surely the Hour shall come. My plan is to keep it secret, so that every soul receives its reward according to its striving. Qur'án 20:15

Second reason relates to the fulfillment of the Promise.The appearance of the great Event would disturb the traditional order and stability of society, causing fear and panic among powerful people. Ambitious people will try as hard as they can to prevent the fulfillment of God's "Promise" to protect their position and privileges. Being informed of the secret of God's Plan, those powerful enemies would make every effort to jeopardize the fulfillment of it. The knowledge of the secret Plan after its fulfillment will create no obstacle. This "Promise" or "Event" is so important that its fulfillment is not delayed or hastened. Suddenly and unexpectedly, at the appointed time of "the Hour" God's Plan is fulfilled.

Question: Why is the fulfillment of the "Promise" or "Event" a cause of "punishment" or "torment" for some people? What is the reason for the "punishment"?

The verses of the Qur'án and other heavenly Books teach us that the "Promised Day" is a day of joy, exultation and celebration for those who are awakened from the sleep of negligence by the rising and shining of the divine Sun. They have discovered that the time for the fulfillment of God's Promise has come.

The heavenly Scriptures also teach us that this great Day is the day of sorrow, mourning and spiritual torment for those who are fast asleep on the bed of heedlessness and are unaware of the rising and shining of the divine Sun.

What deprivation and calamity is more severe than a man being deprived of such illumination? What affliction is greater than a soul's refusal of God's invitation? What torment could be more intense for a man than to flee from the Light of God, to pass his days in the darkness of ignorance and vain imaginings and leave this world unaware? What adversity is greater than for a man to see spring as winter and remain deprived of the beauty, glory and joy of that time of exultation and revival?

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that the Messengers are the intermediary for God's grace to humanity. A reasonable man would not be willing—based on a few words the meaning of which he cannot understand—to imagine that the doors of God's grace and bounty have been closed, that the bestowal and radiance of the Sun of knowledge has ended and will never again shine on the world.[23]

The fact that the appearance of the Promised One is "Great News" for some people and a "warning" to others has been repeatedly stated in God's Words:

> We have sent you as a bearer of glad-tidings and a warner. Qur'án 35:24

> We have not sent you but to give glad-tidings and to warn all the people Qur'án 34:28 and 25:56

> The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to ... proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [good news] and the day of vengeance [warning] of our God.* Isaiah 61:1–2 and Luke 4:18–19

> *This is the Day of Judgement and the Day of Bounty.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God ... because this is why I was sent. Luke 4:43

> A Revelation [the Qur'án] from the Compassionate, the All-Merciful [God] ... containing good news and warning. Qur'án 41:2, 4

> *This is the Day of reward and punishment; the Lord of justice and wisdom is established upon the throne of the Cause. We beseech God, the true One ... not to deprive His servants of this Most Great Announcement.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

It is necessary to know that in this world we are not aware of the existence of the 'veil of torment' that will envelope our being as a result of a denial of God's Promised One. As we saw, the kind Lord, addressing the deniers and enemies of His "Promise" will ask them:

> Do they not think that God's 'veil of torment' will envelope them without their awareness? Qur'án 12:107

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* Jesus announced this Promise in the most perfect way; for He announced the glad-tidings of the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith according to the Islamic calendar. As mentioned below, **He even gave the exact year AH 1260 (the year of the Manifestation of the Bab)**. To study this matter refer to ***I Shall Come Again*** by this author.

Our ignorance can in no wise mean that we will escape this "veil of torment". How many people who appear healthy and think themselves far from death, are unaware that a dangerous disease has invaded their whole body!

> *At the beginning of every Dispensation a vast multitude, who fondly imagine that their deeds are for God, become drowned and ungodly, and perceive this not, ...*[26]
> The Báb

> *They imagine they are doing for Him [God], but whatever they do, they do against Him.*[27]
> The Báb

> *On that Day thou wouldst regard thyself as the inmate of Paradise ... whereas in reality ... thy habitation would be the nethermost fire, though thou thyself wouldst not be cognizant thereof.*[28]
> The Báb

The Báb encourages His followers to hasten and respond to the Call of the Promised One (Bahá'u'lláh) as soon as they hear it:

> Do not hesitate or pause in this matter. If ye hesitate ye will be in Fire, and know it not.[29]
> The Báb

"Fire" has been used as a symbol—it signifies the remoteness of the servant from the Creator. What is the consequence of being distant from God? The closer we are to God, the greater is our happiness and joy; and the farther we are, the greater is our sorrow. According to the Qur'án, being in "Hell Fire" is the same as having a "hard life" (Qur'án 20:124). Eternal happiness can be found in nearness to God, and sadness and grief are ours when we are remote from God. This is the Plan of the Designer of Creation, whether we desire it or not. Our creator has so desired; ours is to be resigned and content.

> *Before the kind faithful Friend* [God], *Pleasant is surrender and more pleasing contentment.*
> 'Abdu'l-Bahá

According to the testimony of God's Messengers, the deniers and enemies of the Promise of God, will discover the presence of the covering veil of torment and the Fire which is blazing in their soul, when they step into the eternal Afterlife. In the physical world, the condition and station of the spirit of man is hidden. However, at the time of one's journey from this physical home to the eternal abode, the covering veil is suddenly removed, and mysteries are revealed. This point has been repeated many times in the heavenly Scriptures:

> Soon they will know.
> Qur'án 15:96

> Soon they will know! Then soon they will know.
> Qur'án 78:4–5

> *Soon shall they be made aware of their deeds, and lament for their souls.*[30]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> Those who deny Our verses (signs), shall soon be cast into the Fire.
> Qur'án 4:56

> *Soon will men's veils be rent asunder, and they will see the consequences of their actions, and shall weep and lament.*[31]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> He is quick to call (the people) to account.
> Qur'án 13:41

We must be aware that the "veil of torment" is of two kinds: one envelopes the spirit of each and every denier, another that of the community. One covers the soul, the other the body. The first is hidden, the second is clear and manifest. The first is the cause of remoteness from God; the second causes war and calamity in the world. The first causes spiritual poverty, the second worldly poverty; the first is the cause of sickness and corruption of the soul, the second the cause of societal sickness and decay.

The gracious God has continually warned and continues to warn us to learn from the fate of former generations; whenever the people denied their Promised One, they were beset by suffering and calamity in this world; their denial caused them to be separated from God and be sunk in sin; and this separation and corruption, in the end, destroyed their life in this world.

> Will they not journey through the land to see what was the fate of former generations? ... Messengers came to them with evidence and proof [but they rejected them], so God did not oppress them, they oppressed themselves. How terrible is the fate of those who commit wrongdoing, those who consider false the signs and verses of God and mock them. Qur'án 30:9–10

> Whatever We narrate to you about the Messengers ... is a reminder and counsel for the believers. Qur'án 11:120

> For those endued with understanding, their stories are instructive. Qur'án 12:111

> We do not chastise the people, until We have sent a Messenger. Qur'án 17:15, see also 28:59

> God does, in nowise, deal unjustly with the people, but the people commit inequity against themselves. Qur'án 10:44

> *O friends of God! Incline your inner ears to the voice of the peerless and self-subsisting Lord, that He may deliver you from the bonds of entanglement and the depths of darkness and enable you to attain the eternal light.*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

> *He Who is the All-Sufficing proclaimeth aloud: "The realm of joy hath been ushered in; be not sorrowful! The hidden mystery hath been made manifest; be not disheartened!" Wert thou to apprehend the surpassing greatness of this Day, thou wouldst renounce the world and all that dwell therein and hasten unto the way that leadeth to the Lord.*[33] Bahá'u'lláh

> *We have commanded men to establish the Great Peace that the world may find tranquility. Yet they have cast behind their backs the Command of God, and followed the paths of the corrupt and the seditious.*[34] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verses were addressed to Muslims:

> We destroyed the people centuries before you (the Muslims). Their Messengers came to them with proofs, but they did not believe. Thus do We punish the wrongdoers. Then We made you successors to them on earth (to test you) to see how you will behave. Qur'án 10:13–14

> Do they expect a future unlike the past? Say: Then wait; I too will wait with you. Qur'án 10:102

Many people do not recognize or appreciate the gift of faith unless they experience hardship and calamity. It is important to know that God will never be unjust to us. The source of these calamities is the rejection of God's Chosen Ones.

> Has not the story of former generations reached them? The people of Noah, Ád, Thamúd, of Abraham, the dwellers of Median and the cities that were destroyed? Messengers came to them with proofs (but they rejected them); God did not wrong them; they wronged their own souls. Qur'án 9:70

According to God's testimony, our fate is in our own hands:

> God does not change His grace and bounty to a people unless they change themselves. Qur'án 8:53

The verses of the Qur'án and the story of the appearance of Messengers testify that hardship and calamity often result in the awakening of people. Our age is not an exception to this rule:

> To every place that We sent a Messenger, We caused its people to suffer with calamity, perchance they (be awakened and) turn to God for help. Qur'án 7:94

To be further assured of God's Promise and gain awareness of the secret of the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án, we should examine and compare two other samples of verses in the Bible and the Qur'án:

The Qur'án	**The Bible**
They say: If ye are truthful when will this Promise come to pass? ... It shall come upon them suddenly, and shall confound them; they shall not be able to prevent its appearance, nor will they get a respite. Qur'án 21:38–40	As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" Jesus answered .... No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man .... Therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come .... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him .... It will be good for that servant doing so when he returns. Matt 24:3–46

Signs in the Qur'án	**Signs in the Bible**
The time of the Promise	The time of the end [the end of the era]
Sudden	The Hour
People will be confounded	No one knows except God
They cannot prevent fulfillment of the Promise	Like the conditions in the days of Noah
They will not be given a respite	Be awake
	Fulfillment of Promise when not expected
	Be awake in time of fulfillment of Promise

There are several new points in the signs given in the Qur'án . One is that the unjust and faithless cannot prevent the fulfillment of God's Promise; since they will not have an opportunity to execute their schemes; before they realize what has happened, the Promise will have been fulfilled. This utterance of God

proves that the "Promise" of God has many enemies and deniers who will arise to fight the supporters of the Promise. Nevertheless, the deniers are unable to achieve their purpose. The Qur'anic verse also states people will be confused and confounded by the fulfilment of the "Promise". This point has been confirmed in other heavenly scriptures:

> The day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion. Micah 7:4

What causes people to be confused? Any unexpected and sudden event causes confusion; inasmuch as people lack the capacity to recognize the Promised One of the age and to face that "sudden event", they don't know what to do. On the one hand, they hear the invitation of the supporters and executors of the Plan of God, and on the other hand, they see the opposition of the hypocrites and enemies of the Plan. In the midst of this conflict, they do not know what to do or which group is right.

To solve the great Puzzle of the Qur'án, in addition to studying the previous verses, we can resort to the following guides:

- The overall Plan of God for the education and evolution of humanity.
- The writings and utterances of the Imams who were inspired by God.

We have examined the overall Plan of God for the education of humanity in a previous volume: *Spiritual Design of Creation*. In this chapter we content ourselves with the mention of two samples from the writings of the Imams. As has been explained earlier in this book, an effort is made for the Qur'án to be the source of all signs and references. However, examining the utterances of the Imams in confirming the verses of the Qur'án may be a source of assurance. In order to be brief, we will mention only two hadiths. Omitting these two would not in any way change the conclusions of the discussion. The truth of the two Messengers of our time can be proven based on the verses of the Qur'án alone. In addition, the Qur'anic verses confirm the truth of the two hadiths. In reality, the two samples of the utterances of the Imams are repetitions of the same Qur'anic facts, combined with a new point that further clarifies the meaning of the verses of the Qur'án.

For the followers of the Shí'ih sect, the most comprehensive source of the utterances of the Imams concerning the appearance of the 12th Imám is *Biháru'l-Anvár*.[35] In this book the unexpected coming of the "Resurrection" and the "Hour" are interpreted as the Rising of the Promised Qá'im. According to the Traditions recorded in *Biháru'l-Anvár*, the Commander of the Faithful (Imám 'Alí), while conversing with the Prophet, asked Him about the appearance of the Promised Qá'im. The Prophet's response is exactly what has been revealed in the Qur'án; the only added point is that these events are related to the appearance of the Qá'im:

> Its knowledge is with God alone; none except Him will disclose its time.*
> Qur'án 7:187

> O Messenger of God! The Qá'im—Who is Your offspring—when will He appear? He said: No one except God will disclose its time. His coming is like "the Hour" .... It will not come except of a sudden. *Bihár u'l-Anvár*, volume 13, page 41

In addition to the above ḥadíth, in *Bihár u'l-Anvár*, the following Qur'anic verse has been interpreted to mean the appearance of the Qá'im.[36]

> Do they expect other than that "the Hour" shall come upon them suddenly and that they be unaware? Qur'án 43:66

Also, in the book *Najm-i-Tháqib*, it is related that Imám Ḥusayn has said:

> The Qá'im will appear like "the Resurrection" and except for God no one is aware of its time, and He will come unexpectedly, and He is "the Hour".[37]

It is not only in Islamic literature that the "Resurrection" has been interpreted as the appearance of the Qá'im and the rising of the people from the tombs of negligence. The Bible confirms this matter. For example, Jesus has said:

> I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?
> John 11:25–26

The verses and signs we discuss in this chapter all demonstrate that we must await the fulfilment of an "Event" or a "Promise". In addition to these verses, the Qur'án includes other verses that speak of "the Promise" and "the Hour". The difference is that they provide the year of the coming of "the Hour", and the time of the fulfillment of "the Promise". These other verses will be examined in the next two chapters.

Many verses of the Qur'án inform us that:

- After the appearance of the Promised One, most people will remain unaware of it.
- A group of people will strive to prevent the spread of His religion.

Can any news be made any clearer than the following?

> They say: When will this Promise be fulfilled? .... Will you believe after the Event [Promise] is fulfilled? [Will people believe once the promise of God is fulfilled?] They ask: Is He [the Promised One] the Truth? Say! By my Lord, surely He is the Truth, and you cannot hinder Him .... Is not God's Promise true? (it is surely true), but most people are ignorant [of God's Promise).]
> Qur'án 10:48, 51, 53, 55

> This is your Lord's straight Path .... Did not Messengers come from among you? Did they not relate to you My verses? And did they not warn you of meeting such

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* Note the similarity between the Qur'anic verse and the following verse of the book of Daniel: "Go your way Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end." Daniel 12:9

a Day? .... Surely whatever hath been promised to you shall be fulfilled, and you cannot prevent its fulfillment. Qur'án 6:16, 103, 134

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.[38] The Báb

O Baṣír! Purify thy mind and refine thy sight. Verily God hath manifested this Cause from such heights that no mind or heart can conceive.[39] The Báb

Knowledge of God gained from His words

His holiness "the Proof" hath appeared with signs and testimonies.[40] The Báb

Know that the Source of this Book [the Bayán] *is God.*[41] The Báb

The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.[42] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O people! Verily, this Most-Exalted Pen moveth by the Fingers of the power of your Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious. This is not of me, but from God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.[43] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O people, your days are passing swift as lightening, and the panaply of your desires and possessions will soon be rolled up. Shake off the slumber of negligence.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

O servant of God! The Tree which We had planted with the Hand of Providence hath borne its destined fruit, and the glad-tidings We had imparted in the Book have appeared in full effect.[45] Bahá'u'lláh

The River of life hath, in this Day, been made manifest and the true Spirit hath appeared. Strive that you may receive a portion of this boundless grace .... This blessed Day hath never had, nor will it ever have, any peer or likeness. Whatever is forfeited is impossible to acquire thereafter.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

1 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, pp. 27–28. (prov. tr.)
2 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 101. (prov. tr.)
3 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 369. (prov. tr.)
4 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 369. (prov. tr.)
5 Asráru'l-Áthár, Vol. 4, p. 528. (prov. tr.)
6 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 166. (prov. tr.)
7 *Payám-i-Bahá'í*, no. 377, April 2011.
8 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 403. (prov. tr.)
9 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5 (no. III)
10 Amr va Khalq, vol. 2, p. 75. (prov. tr.)
11 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 236. (prov. tr.)
12 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 12–13 (no. X)
13 Yárán-i-Pársí, pp. 15–16. (prov. tr.)
14 'Ahd-i-A'lá by Abu'l-Qásim Afnán, pp. 232–233. (prov. tr.)
15 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
16 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 158–159.
17 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 113.
18 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh (Andalíb) p. 122. (prov. tr.)
19 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 50.

20 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 68.
21 Áyát-i-Iláhí, Vol. 2, p. 2. (prov. tr.)
22 Áyát-i-Iláhí, Vol. 2, p. 2. (prov. tr.)
23 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 67–68 (no. XXVII)
24 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 328 prov. tr.
25 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 3, p. 345. (prov. tr.)
26 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 95.
27 The Persian Bayán, p. 201. (prov. tr.)
28 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 83.
29 The Persian Bayán, p. 278. (prov. tr.)
30 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 40. (prov. tr.)
31 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 66. (prov. tr.)
32 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 71 (paragraph 5.1)
33 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74.
34 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 89. (prov. tr.)
35 *Bihár u'l-Anvár*, pp. 23, 206, 285, Persian translation
36 *Bihár u'l-Anvár*, vol. 13, p. 204.
37 *Najm-i-Tháqib*, p. 29.
38 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 41.
39 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 404 (prov. tr.)
40 Ḥaḍrat-i-Báb, p. 875 (prov. tr.)
41 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 172. (prov. tr.)
42 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5 (no. III)
43 Amr va Khalq, vol. 2, p. 357. (prov. tr.)
44 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 320. (prov. tr.)
45 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (paragraph 5.9)
46 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 234. (prov. tr.)

7
The end of an age and the fulfillment of God's promise

To investigate the verses related to the time of "the Promise", it is appropriate to start the discussion with these previously mentioned verses:

> For every ummah there is a Messenger. When their Messenger comes, He will judge between them with justice and will not wrong them. They say: If you are truthful, when will the Promise be fulfilled? Say .... For every ummah a term has been fixed; when there appointed tine is come, they cannot hasten or delay it even for one hour. Qur'án 10:47–49

According to the above verses, people were asking when "the event" would occur. The answer that is given to them is that each ummah has a fixed and limited life. In these verses the length of this life is not specified, but the transitory nature of every ummah is mentioned.

In contrast, there are verses in the heavenly Books, including the Qur'án, that do inform curious people regarding the time of the fulfillment of "the Promise", however this is given in terms of allegory and allusion:

> We hath Thee not but to bring to all people the "Good News" and the Warning; but most people understand not, and say: When will this Promise be fulfilled? Say: For you **a Day** has been fixed, you cannot hasten or delay it even by an hour. Qur'án 34:28–30

Since it is obvious that "a Day" is a very short time for such an important Promise to be fulfilled, and that no Messengers appeared one day after the revelation of these verses, we need to solve this enigma with the help of other verses. The following verses aid us in solving this Puzzle:

> He [God] directeth the Cause [*Amr*] of the earth from heaven. Then it [the Cause] returneth to Him, in a Day, which is equal to a thousand years as you count [them]. Qur'án 32:5

This can be interpreted as: God illuminates the earth with the light of the guidance and wisdom of His religion. Then, in the course of one Day that, in your counting, is a thousand years, it (the religion) returns to Him. The two quotes above complement each other:

Qur'án 34:28–30	**Qur'án 32:5**
"We have not sent Thee"	*"He directeth the Cause"*
The role of the Messenger of Islám in the life of the people is to bring glad-tidings and a warning.	The role of God in the life of the people is to guide them.
The time of the fulfillment of the Promise is after the passing of "a Day".	The effect of God's guidance in people's lives disappears after the passing of "a Day". The length of this Day is a thousand years.

Sura 34 Saba' does not specify the length of "a Day":

> Say: The Promise is fulfilled after "a Day". Qur'án 34:30

Sura 32 al-Sajdah does specify the length of "a Day":

> The length of that Day is a thousand years in your reckoning. Qur'án 32:5

It is important to note that only verse 32:5 specifies the length of "a Day" and "He directs the Cause" (*Amr*, meaning "affair, cause, religion") relates to the management of affairs on the earth, i.e., the guiding of humanity by God. How does God direct the affairs on earth? Through the teachings and commandments (laws) that He sends with the Messengers and Imams to the people during the period of Revelation. After God has revealed His Religion or Cause, and sent His guidance through His Warner, from the time of the Ascension of that Messenger, the effect of His teachings upon people's lives gradually diminishes . After the passing of a specified time, i.e. one thousand years, the light of God's guidance completely vanishes, returning to its Source, i.e. God.

Now let us see how many years during the dispensation of Islám, did the Director of world guide the affairs of the earth from heaven. This period of guidance and management began with the appearance of the great Messenger of God, Muḥammad, and ended with the death of the eleventh Imám, Ḥasan al-'Askarí. Imám Ḥasan passed away in the year 260 AH. After this date, for a period of one thousand years, the effects of the rays of God's guidance were still manifest in the power of Islám and its many contributions to the advancement of human society. However, at the end of this thousand-years-period, the heavenly gift returned to its Sender. It is evident that to calculate the period of Islám, we must add 260 and 1000, bringing the date of the expected Promised One to 1260 AH.

God fulfilled His "Promise" in exactly the year prophesied. The Islamic year AH 1260 (CE 1844)* is the beginning of the history of the Bahá'í Faith. In that year, His holiness the Báb, proclaimed the Cause, revealing what had been hidden from human eyes. Both the aforementiond quotes predicted the period of Islám as "a day" and Qur'án 32:5 defined it as a one-thousand-year Day.

As was previously mentioned in this book, we refrain from a reliance on the use of Traditions (hadiths) as much as possible; because even Muslim scholars cannot agree about their authenticity or accuracy. To some degree they are justified, since, amongst the thousands of traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams, many contradict each other.

> *... the traditions themselves grievously differ, and their obscurities are manifold.*[1]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Therefore, the superior method for finding the truth is to use the Qur'án as our guide. God's justice requires that a seeker of truth should find the answer to

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* As "a time, times, and half a time" (3 × 360 + 180 = 1260), which appears in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, and in Revelation 12:14.

such an important question in a heavenly Book even if it includes thousands of other matters. This writer, despite his disinclination to use ḥadíth, makes mention of a ḥadíth that repeats and confirms Qur'anic verses. Comparing this ḥadíth with the previously mentioned Qur'anic verses demonstrates that both utterances come from the same Source. According to a ḥadíth mentioned in *Maccan Victories*, vol. 1, p. 109, the Prophet Muḥammad said:

> If my ummah were pious it will have one Day, and if it were corrupt, half a Day; each Day in your reckoning is a thousand years.

Another similar ḥadíth from the *Najm-i-Tháqib*, p. 87, states:

> If my people were pious it will have one Day, and if it were corrupt half a Day; each Day in the sight of God is equal to your one thousand years.*

Najm-i-Tháqib mentions that the ḥadíth was spoken by Muḥammad on the occasion of the revelation of Qur'án 7:34:

> For every ummah a time period is fixed. Qur'án 7:34

After hearing the above verse, those present asked: "When is the end of the period of Islám?" The above ḥadíth relating to the piety or corruption of Muslims was the response. We see again in this ḥadíth that the Prophet Muḥammad refers to His followers as His ummah ("My people") and specifies their duration as a thousand years, if they were to be pious.†

What is the meaning of *amr*?

One of the main pieces of the great Puzzle of the Qur'án is the word "***amr***". Like *khátam*, *amr* has several meanings. However, unlike the meanings for *khátam*, the meanings for *amr* are all similar to each other. *Riaz-ul-Lughat* (Riyáḍ al-Lughát), an Arabic-Persian dictionary, lists the meaning of *amr* as the religion (of God).

In the Qur'án, the word *amr*, translated as "heavenly guidance" or "religion of God", has been used many times. Note the following verses:

> This your ummah is one ummah ... but people divide up their religion [amr]). Qur'án 23:52–53

> Our religion [amr] is only one .... Qur'án 54:50

> Verily they had sought dissension previously and were, agitating the affairs for you, until the truth came and the religion of God [amr] became manifest, even though they disliked [it]. Qur'án 9:48

> Do they expect other than ... the religion of thy Lord [amr] to come ...?Qur'án 16:33

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* Another source: *Alyawáqít-wal-Jawáhir*, compiled by Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Wahháb Shi'ráni (Mabádí-i-Istidlál. Compiled by 'Ináyatu'lláh Suhráb, pp. 231–239)

† Throughout Islamic history, Muslims have been entangled in many wars; however, they have established one of the greatest civilizations, for this reason, they may be considered "pious".

> God's religion will come.* Do not try to hasten its manifestation [wanting for it to appear sooner than decreed].† Qur'án 16:1

Verses 9:48 and 16:1 use *Amru'lláh* ("the religion of God") and verse 16:33 uses the similar phrase *Amru Rabbika* ("the religion of thy Lord "). The subject of "haste" was discussed in chapter 4, where people were trying to hasten the fulfillment of the "Promise" of God. They were told: "Be patient! At the appointed Hour, the Promise will be fulfilled." The words "religion", "Promise", "haste", "fulfillment" and "ascension" are some of the important words that will assist in solving the Puzzle of the Qur'án. The expression "directs the Cause" has been used in the following verse and is related to the great Event of our time:

> He [(Your Lord, God] directs the Cause [*Amr*] and explains the verses, perchance you may be made certain of [the promise of] meeting your Lord.‡ Qur'án 13:2

If we assume that the word "Amr" in the above verse means "Command", the argument does not change. How does God bring His Command? Through His Messengers.

> *Verily His decree hath been issued, and the command of God, as given in the Mother Book, hath indeed been revealed ....*[2] The Báb

If we assume "Amr" to mean "Affair" or "Work" the meaning of the sentence would be: Until God brings His Work. What is the Work of God? Directing and guiding humanity.

> *... that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained.*[3] The Báb

> *The Cause of God is made manifest.*[4] The Báb

In the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, *amr* and derivatives of *dabara* (e.g. *yudabbir* ("to direct", "to manage", "to arrange", to "execute") have been used many times:

> *The Cause is manifest, it shineth resplendent as the sun, but the people have become veils unto themselves.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Thus hath the True One come and the command of Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise, been fulfilled. The hosts of earth and heaven are powerless to resist His Cause, nor can all the kings and rulers of the world ever frustrate His purpose.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Thou holdest within Thy grasp the reins of government, and in Thy right hand is the Kingdom of destiny. There is no God but Thee, the Almighty, the Most-Powerful.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

There is yet another connection between *amr* in the Qur'án and the Bahá'í Faith. Since the founding of the Bahá'í Faith, its common title in Persian is *Amr-*

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* In the heavenly scriptures, sometimes the past tense is used instead of the present; for two reasons: First, God's language is different from ours; second, God's statements are so certain that the future is as the past.

† Imám Ṣádiq has connected this verse to the appearance of the Qá'im. Mihdí-i-Maw'úd, vol. 13, *Biḥáru'l-Anvár*, p. 1074.

‡ Verses related to "Meeting God" or the "Presence of God" are discussed in detail in chapter 13.

i-Bahá'í (the Bahá'í Cause or Bahá'í Faith). Persian-speaking Bahá'ís use phrases such as "this Amr" or "Amru'lláh" instead of the Bahá'í religion.

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh explains that:

> *These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of the will of God* ["heaven of God's Amr"].[8]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Note the following examples from the Bahá'í Writings along with verses of the Qur'án:

> Do they expect other than ... the coming of the Cause [Amr] of thy Lord?
> Qur'án 16:33

> *The Decree of thy Lord was fulfilled ... ever since the inception of the Cause* [Amr] *of thy Lord ....*[9]
> The Báb

> The truth hath come and the Cause [Amr] of God manifested, but they [the people] dislike this.
> Qur'án 9:48

> Wait until the Religion of God is come.
> Qur'án 9:24 (translation 1)

> Be patient until God appears with His Cause.
> Qur'án 9:24 (translation 2)

> *The appointed time is now come, and the Cause made manifest; the Crier raised up His Voice, but most of the people are bereft of hearing.*[10]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth. Fear ye God and entertain no doubts regarding His Cause ....*[11]
> The Báb

> *O people of the world! Fear ye God and reject not Him through Whom the Faith of God is made manifest.*[12]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?*[13]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> God's religion will come in time! Seek not then to hasten its coming.
> Qur'án 16:1

> *God, verily, hath prescribed to thee to submit unto Him Who is His Remembrance, and unto His Cause* [Amr] ....[14]
> The Báb

> Treat one another with forgiveness and remission until God manifests His Cause [Amr]. Verily, God has power over all things.
> Qur'án 2:109

> *I render thanks and yield praise unto God for having been chosen by Him as the Exponent of His Cause* [Amr] ....[15]
> The Báb

Question: Why should the Cause (Religion) come? Because that *Amr* (Cause) is no longer in the midst of the people. After the conclusion of **a Day of a thousand years**, that heavenly radiance has returned to God.

> He [God] directeth the Affair {Amr] of the earth from heaven; then that "Amr" returneth to Him in one Day which is equal to a thousand years.
> Qur'án 32:5

Since **the Day of a thousand years** has concluded, God gives us the glad-tidings: The *Amr* which had returned to Him, has returned.

> *... and ever since the inception of the Cause of thy Lord ....*[16]
> The Báb

Should anyone deny this Cause and remain oblivious of the truth of this Most Great Revelation, he will never be able to demonstrate the truth of any cause.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

In verse 32:5, the gracious God informs us that the *Amr* "ascends" unto Him. In verse 2:109, God calls us to forgiveness and remission until His *Amr* returns. This will be the time of joy and thankfulness, not a time of mourning since the days of expectation have ended. The same Speaker Who told us of "the ascent of the *Amr*", now informs us that "the ascended *Amr*" has returned. The Báb addressing Muḥammad Sháh, the king of Persia:

Ever since the Cause [Amr] *of thy Lord hath appeared none of thy deeds hath been acceptable, and thou hast been lost in palpable error ....*[18] The Báb

In the domain of existence there are three stations or Kingdoms:

- **The Kingdom of God**—The Divine World.
- **The Kingdom of the Cause (Revelation)**—The World of Messengers Who are the Intermediary between God and His creation, and are distinguished and honored with God's inspiration and guidance.
- **The World of Creation**—The World of servants who are in need of guidance from the Messengers.

Know that [the Kingdom of] Creation and [the Kingdom of] Revelation are His. Qur'án 7:54

Thine are the kingdoms of Creation and Revelation, O Thou Who art the Lord of all the worlds.[19] The Báb

... the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.[20] Bahá'u'lláh

In addition, in former religions the appearance of the Messengers is described as an "appointment", meaning "sending on a mission". For example, "the time of the appointment of the Prophet of Islám". However, in the Bahá'í Faith the appearance is described as the "proclamation of the Cause" or "manifestation of the Cause". For example, instead of saying "the appointment of the Báb", we say "Proclamation of the Báb". The reason for using the word "proclamation" or "manifestation" is that God kept hidden from people His Promised One and His Cause until the appointed time.

... until finally in that year I proclaimed God's hidden Cause ....[21] The Báb

Say: O friends! Suffer not yourselves to be far removed from the ocean of heavenly grace. He is come astonishingly near unto you. He Who had been concealed from men's eyes is now come. How good is His coming! In one hand He is carrying the water of life and in the other the charter of true liberty. Cast ye away one thing and take hold of another. Cast away whatsoever pertaineth to the world and take firm hold of that which the hand of divine providence imparteth unto you. Lo, that which no eye hath ever beheld is now revealed.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

Two parts of the same Puzzle

Verse 32:5 is the most important and most precise verse in the Qur'án regarding the conclusion of the dispensation of Islám, and the beginning of a new one. Other verses have all been revealed to explain, confirm and

complement that holy verse. To clarify the matter, it is beneficial to consider the two interrelated verses, 32:5 and 9:24, together:

Qur'án 32:5	Qur'án 9:24
He (God) directeth the Cause (Amr) of the earth from heaven. Then, it (Amr) ascendeth unto Him in a Day which is equal to a thousand years by your reckoning.	Wait until God bringeth His Cause (Amr). God guideth not the disobedient.

We can clearly see that the above two verses are revealed to interpret and confirm each other:

Qur'án 32:5	Qur'án 9:24
The date of Manifestation	Patience and expectation
This verse informs us that in the course of a thousand years, "the Cause" ascends unto God. This verse shows the lifespan of Islám.	This verse asks us to be patient until God brings His "Cause", or He returns it back to us. This verse gives the glad-tidings of the appearance of God's "Cause" at the end of the lifespan of Islám.

There is clear harmony and agreement between these verses of God. After exhorting us to "wait", the verse refers to people who hear the Promise of the appearance of the Promised One but do not take any steps to search for Him—"*God does not guide the disobedient*". What disobedience? The shortcoming in not searching for the Promised One, the failure to investigate and accept all the verses that combine to clearly speak of the time of the manifestation of the Promised One and the fulfillment of God's Promise.

The command of God to be patient and expect is also in harmony with verses we examined concerning the "Seal of the Prophets". In that discussion, we saw that in many instances the Qur'án gives the glad-tidings of the Promise. In future chapters we also see that the Qur'án asks Muslims not to attempt to hasten the fulfillment of the Divine Promise, and to expect the "Great Announcement" in the future. The encouragement to be patient is in harmony with those verses and confirms them.

New dispensation after the thousand-year-Day

In addition to the previously mentioned verses, another verse sets out the end of the lifespan of Islám and the rising of the new dispensation:

> The people want you to hasten the torment. God will never fail in fulfilling His Promise. Every day in the sight of your Lord is a thousand years according to your reckoning. Qur'án 22:47

The above verse is the only one in the Qur'án where the words "Promise" and "thousand" appear together. This is of great importance since it aids us in solving the Puzzle.

In helping to "solve the Puzzle of the Qur'án", in particular the duration of Islám, verses 32:5 and 22:47 rank first and second. All the following important words have been used, and points made, in verse 22:47:

- People's impatience for the fulfillment of the Promise.
- Torment: The fate and punishment for people who deny the fulfillment of the Promise.
- The Promise: The Promise of the appearance of the Promised One.
- The one-thousand-year-Day: The period of expectation until the fulfillment of the Promise.

We saw earlier in the chapter that, according to Qur'án 34:28–30, people were asking the Prophet of Islám and Muslims: "If you are truthful, when will the Promise come to pass?" Their answer was that the time of the fulfillment of the Promise will be after the passing of a day. According to verse 22:47, people were raising the same question. Again, the signs of doubt and misgiving are apparent in their question. Before they were saying: "If you are truthful when will be the time of the fulfillment of the Promise?" This time, they say: "Hasten the torment"; meaning hurry up and prove to us that your Promise is true.

The following verse shows that the haste is on the part of the deniers and mockers:

> They who deny it (the Hour, the Promise) wish to hasten its fulfillment.
> Qur'án 42:18

Joyful news for some and sorrowful news for others

As we discussed in chapter 6, the reason for the use of the word "torment" instead of "**promise**" in many verses is: the heavenly Scriptures, such as the Qur'án, teach us that the fulfillment of God's Promise is an immensely joyful news for the believers, and terribly sad news for the deniers.

> *Say! He is the Water of reunion for those who are seized with the thirst of separation, but torment for those who turn away from the Truth; they are indeed an outcast people.*[23]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The discussion of verses 34:28–30 fully confirms the above point. Let us examine the points of these verses to clarify the matter:

- The purpose of dispatching the Messenger: "We hath not sent Thee but to bring **glad-tidings** (good Promise) and **warning** (Promise of punishment) to the people".
- People's question: "When will this **Promise** come to pass?
- The answer: "Say: The time of the fulfillment of the **Promise** is after the passing of one Day".

As we see, these verses first mention the joyful Promise and the Warning; then they mention the time of the fulfillment of the Promise. It is clear that the fulfillment of the Promise has vastly dissimilar consequences for different people.

Other verses in the Qur'án also testify that the fulfillment of God's "Promise" will cause the downfall of some people (i.e. the deniers of the Promised One), and the advancement of the state of others (i.e. the believers in the Promised One).

> When the inevitable Event cometh to pass, none can deny it. It is an Event that will bring a group of people low, and others will be exalted. Qur'án 56:1-3

Let us return to the original discussion: People were asking the honorable Messenger (Muḥammad), in a mocking manner, that: If this "torment" (or bad news, warning) is true, send it sooner that we may see how it is. Again, the answer is exactly the same as it was in the Sura 34 Saba', meaning this "torment" for the deniers will come after the passing of "**a-thousand-year-Day**". The absolute similarity between the two answers proves that these two verses from Sura 34 Saba' and Sura 22 Ḥajj have been revealed in answer to one question.

It would be helpful to also compare the mention of "torment" in the following verse with the previously discussed verses:

> They want you to send the torment sooner. If it were not that a certain time had been fixed for the occurrence of the torment it would have come upon them [now]. It shall certainly come upon them of a sudden and they shall not understand. Qur'án 29:53

Compare the above verse with the previously discussed verses:

> Are they sure that the veil of torment of God shall not come upon them, or that that Hour shall not come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware?? Qur'án 12:107

> They ask you to hasten the **torment**; but God will never fail in fulfilling His Promise; each day in the sight of your Lord is a thousand years by your reckoning. Qur'án 22:47

These verses all speak of the coming **torment** and provide the following signs concerning its appearance:

- The people are hasty.
- The torment will come at a fixed and predestined time.
- It will come suddenly.
- The people will not understand and will not recognize it.
- The time Puzzle: "**a thousand years is equal to a Day in the sight of God**". Meaning you have no patience; a thousand years is a short time in the sight of God; you must be patient until the time of the Promise is come; after the passing of this one-thousand-year-Day its time will come.*

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* A weakness of man is impatience or haste. An example of impatience is that with the appearance of a Messenger, they expect that suddenly and without earnest striving or trouble on their part, the world will become the highest Heaven. The Qur'án hints at this human weakness: Man is hasty. (Qur'án 17:11) Human evolution and the establishment of peace and prosperity requires patience and a great effort. Guidance and bounty is from God, obedience and endeavor come from us.

The equivalence of "one Day" to "a thousand years" is also confirmed in the Psalms of David:

> For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by.
>
> Psalms 90:4

There is a ḥadíth that determines **the last two digits of the year of the appearance of the Promised Qá'im** (the One Who rises). The importance of this ḥadíth is in its similarity to Qur'anic verses. For this reason, it is appropriate to examine it. The ḥadíth is from Imám Ja'far-i-Ṣádiq and has been mentioned in various sources; for example, in *Faṣl'ul-Khiṭáb*, p. 126, concerning the appearance of the Mihdí. It states:

> In the year 60 His Cause will be manifested and His Remembrance is raised up.*

It is clear that the utterance of the Imám is related to the fulfillment of a future Promise. Just as this Promise has been called *Amr* ("Cause"), here also it is referred to as *Amr*. *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") is also used many times in the Qur'án with regard to this Promise—this will be discussed fully in future chapters.

In another ḥadíth, Imám Ja'far aṣ-Ṣádiq refers to the Lord of the Age as "the Lord of the Cause":

> The Lord of this Cause [Amr] is younger than Us.[24]

His holiness the Báb proclaimed His Cause when He was only twenty-five.

The same signs mentioned in the Qur'án regarding the manifestation of the Promised One of our age, also appear in other heavenly Books. For example, there are many references in the Bible that the Promised One of God will appear suddenly, like a thief in the night, while people are fast asleep and unaware. In the Jewish scriptures it is also said that the Promised One will suddenly enter His Temple (Malachi 3:1). Just as the Qur'anic verses connect the year of the Manifestation to 1,260, Jewish and Christian scriptures proclaim the same date 16 times—**they even mention the exact number: 1,260.**

> And I give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy for 1260 days ....
>
> Revelation 11:3

The precise signs that the Jewish Prophets and His Holiness Jesus Christ have given regarding the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith are many. A large number of these prophecies and their fulfillment in the manifestation of the Bahá'í Faith have been discussed in 3 volumes—over 1,500 pages—by this author:

I Shall Come Again *Lord of Lords* *King of Kings*

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* Other references: Ghayatu'l-Marám, Jawámi' al-Kalim, al-'Iṣmatu wa'r-Raj'at. Quoted in *Bishárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání*, compiled by Ḥisám Nuqabá'í, p. 54; also, *Qámús-i-Íqán*, vol. 3, compiled by Ishráq-Khávarí, pp 880–1, *Biháru'l-Anvár*, vol. 13, p. 303, Persian translation Jinnát-i-Na'ím, vol. 1, p. 199.

Just as in the Qur'án, the Promised Day is called "the Day of Torment", in Christian scriptures also that Day is referred to as "the Day of Punishment".

> For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.
> Luke 21:22

Two Promises, one good, one bad, are also recorded in the sacred Jewish scriptures (Isaiah 61:1–2). The similarity between the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures is a clear sign that their Speaker is One.

The matter of the punishment for the deniers of the Promised One of our age is also repeated in the Writings of His Holiness the Báb:

> *O peoples of the earth! I swear by your Lord! Ye shall act as former generations have acted. Warn ye, then, yourselves of the terrible, the most grievous vengeance of God. For God is, verily, potent over all things.*[25] The Báb

The following verses of the Qur'án also point to the occurrence of "the torment":

> Indeed, the torment of your Lord will surely come, and no one can prevent it .... Then woe to those that on that day consider truth falsehood, and busy themselves with their vain imaginings. Qur'án 52:7–12

According to a ḥadíth recorded in *Biḥár al-Anwár* ("Seas of Lights"), the following verse is related to the manifestation of the Qá'im (the One Who rises):[26]

> And if We delay the torment for a specified time, they will surely say: "What is hindering it from coming to pass?" No doubt on the day that it [the torment)] cometh upon them, it cannot be averted [its occurrence is certain], and they will be entangled by what they were mocking. Qur'án 11:8

Notes on the great Puzzle

Here are gathered some interrelated points from the Qur'án:

10:47	For every ummah God sends a Messenger.
10:49	For every ummah there is a fixed life.
34:28	We sent Thee as a bringer of good news and a warner.
34:29	When will this Promise come to pass?
34:29	The Promise will come to pass after the passing of one Day.
32:5	The length of a Day is a thousand years.

In many of the Writings of the Báb reference is made to the manifestation and descent of the "Cause" from God and the fulfillment of the Promise of the heavenly Books:

> *O ye people! The Cause hath, verily, come to you from the merciful God.*[27] The Báb

> *We, verily, revealed the Cause among you that ye may know the One Who created you.*[28] The Báb

O servant of the Merciful! I swear by God! The Cause hath, verily, come to you from God.[29]
The Báb

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord. Verily this is the true Faith of God, and sufficient witness are God and such as are endowed with the knowledge of the Book.[30]
The Báb

1 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 201.
2 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 56.
3 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
4 The Persian Bayán, p. 211. (prov. tr.)
5 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 79.
6 *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 146–147.
7 Majmú'iy-i-Munáját Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 2, p. 85. (prov. tr.)
8 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 67.
9 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 24.
10 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 105— prov. tr.
11 *Sections From the Writings of The Báb*, p. 57.
12 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 2, p. 58. (prov. tr.)
13 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 131.
14 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 42.
15 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 10.
16 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 24.
17 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 246. (prov. tr.)
18 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 25.
19 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 185.
20 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 1, p. 19.
21 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 12.
22 The Bahá'í World, vol. 18, pp 967-968
23 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 253. (prov. tr.)
24 Biḥáru'l-Anvár Aljámi'at Lidurur L'a'ímat'ul-Aṭhar, vol. 52, p. 287.
25 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 72.
26 *Biḥáru'l-Anvár*, vol. 13, p. 246.
27 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 61. (prov. tr.)
28 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 109. (prov. tr.)
29 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 110. (prov. tr.)
30 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 41.

Part 4
The promise of contemporary Messengers

This part contains two chapters:

8. **Two Messengers: the "Great Remembrance" and the "Great Announcement"**
9. **Contemporary Messengers—united and harmonious**

This is that Great Announcement mentioned and recorded in all the heavenly Books.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

All the keys of heaven God hath chosen to place on My right hand, and all the keys of hell on My left ....[2] The Báb

Verily, I am the Qá'im Whose appearance ye have been promised.[3] The Báb

1 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 189. (prov. tr.)
2 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 12.
3 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 245. (prov. tr.)

8
Two Messengers: the "Great Remembrance" and the "Great Announcement"

For every Announcement a time has been fixed and soon ye shall know.
Qur'án 6:67

O people of the earth! Whoso obeyeth the Remembrance of God and His Book hath in truth obeyed God and His chosen ones and he will, in the life to come, be reckoned in the presence of God among the inmates of the Paradise of His good-pleasure.[1]
The Báb

The heavenly scriptures show that an "Announcement" has been recorded in the Book of the world that, by the Will of God, must remain hidden from the people for a fixed period of time. This "Announcement" alludes to the greatest event in human history. It is a revitalizing and joyous occasion the like of which the eyes of creation have never seen. This event has been repeatedly mentioned, in the heavenly scriptures, as "the Joyous News" and "the Great Announcement".

Take heed lest the word "Prophet" withhold you from this Most Great Announcement ....[2]
Bahá'u'lláh

In the Qur'án, the title *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") is used more than any other title in reference to the Báb. This title is also repeatedly mentioned in the Writings of the Báb:

By the righteousness of God! He is indeed the Truth from God .... Hesitate not, be it for one moment, in accepting this Cause. We shall indeed question you – your hearings, sight, and hearts. Verily, the Cause of God revealed by the Remembrance hath been *irrevocably decreed in the Mother Book.*[3]
The Báb

Verily,I am God, besides Whom there is no God. I have, in truth, raised up the Remembrance for My sake ... Verily, the promise of your merciful Lord is the Truth. God is a witness over all things .... Then say: Verily, this Book is My proof from God. whosoever desireth let him believe, and whosoever desireth let him turn away.[4]
The Báb

The Qur'án is the source of Divine mysteries and wisdom. Sura 38 Ṣád contains examples of these hidden truths. In this sura, we find the glad-tidings of the appearance of *Naba' 'Aẓim* ("Great Announcement" or "Great News") repeated many times in different ways through the use of the word *Dhikr* or its derivatives. In each of these lies a hidden allusion to the appearance of another One named *Dhikr*, Whose purpose is to "remind" and prepare the people for the future "Great Announcement".

As we shall see in this chapter, *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") and the "Great Remembrance" are among the most important titles of the Báb. Sura 38 Ṣád begins:

Ṣád; [I swear] by the Qur'án [that is] full of the Remembrance [*adh-Dhikr*]. Qur'án 38:1

Within this sura the two titles of the Messengers of our time are repeated many times:

He is not but a Warner [Dhikr Remembrance] for all the world. Qur'án 38:87 (tr. 1)

He is only sent forth to guide and remind the world. Qur'án 38:87 (tr. 2)

Say: He is a **Great Announcement** from Whom you turn away.
Qur'án 38:67–68

You shall surely learn of **His Announcement** after a while. Qur'án 38:88 (tr. 1)

Surely you will hear the **news** of His appearance after a while.
Qur'án 38:88 (tr. 2)

To honor and glorify this unique and unparalleled Event, a sura named an-Naba' ("**Announcement**" or "**News**") is revealed in the Qur'án:

About what are they disputing? Concerning the Great Announcement about which they disagree. Surely they shall soon know. Qur'án 78:1–5

Bahá'ís believe that the promise of "the joyful News" or "the Great Announcement" is the glad-tidings of the coming of a Messenger Who has brought the gift of the best and most important news for humanity. According to this Announcement, the period of promise and expectation has ended, and the Springtime of hope and nearness to God has blossomed.

O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favours which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Day-Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire.[5] Bahá'u'lláh

He Who is the All-Sufficing proclaimeth aloud: "The realm of joy hath been ushered in; be not sorrowful! The hidden mystery hath been made manifest; be not disheartened!" Wert thou to apprehend the surpassing greatness of this Day, thou wouldst renounce the world and all that dwell therein and hasten unto the way that leadeth to the Lord.[6] Bahá'u'lláh

O servants! Pleasant is the utterance of the Friend: Where is the soul who will taste its sweetness, and where is the ear that will hearken unto it? Well is it with him who, in this day, communeth with the Friend and in His path renounceth and forsaketh all save Him, that he may behold a new world and gain admittance to the everlasting paradise.[7] Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í Faith is the heavenly Message for peace and prosperity in the world. It is our duty to strive and search; God will guide and assist. All heavenly scriptures announce that this will be the time for wars and separation to end, for humanity to engage in fellowship with one another in perfect peace and tranquility, and together establish a new and lasting global civilization.

Say: This is that Great Announcement with which the Books of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed, have been adorned.[8] Bahá'u'lláh

That which was promised in the Books hath been made manifest. He is ... the Great Announcement the glad tidings of which hath been recorded in the Qur'án by the Merciful God.[9]
Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, the Most Great Announcement hath come; yet the people, for the most part, are heedless.[10]
Bahá'u'lláh

... in the Qur'án acclaimed as the Great Announcement.[11]
Bahá'u'lláh

As in the Qur'án, the Traditions also confirm the appearance of two Promised Ones in our time, with the names of "the Qá'im" and "the Spirit of God". For example, the following ḥadíth:

> Even if there remains only one Day from the life of the world, God will make it so long till My offspring Mehdi appears in it. Then Christ, the Spirit of God, shall descend and stand in prayer behind Him.[12]

Some Traditions refer to the Return of "Imám Ḥusayn". For example, this ḥadíth from Imám Ṣádiq:

> He was asked: Who is the first to appear? He said: Ḥusayn Who will appear after the Qá'im.[13]

Just as John the Baptist prepared people for the coming of Christ, the Báb—the Remembrance of God—also had a similar role. In this respect, there is a great similarity between the Bahá'í Faith and Christianity.

Disagreements regarding the "Great Announcement"

Sura 78 Naba' informs us that people will disagree concerning the meaning of "the Great Announcement":

> ... The Great Announcement concerning which the people disagree (dispute).
> Qur'án 78:2-3

As prophesied in verses of Sura 18 al-Kahf (which we will study), disagreements among the people regarding the Bahá'í Faith exist from its inception and would continue into the future. Some Muslims consider the Bahá'ís to be a misguided and misleading sect, and have attempted to destroy it. Another group of Muslims believes that the Bahá'ís should be free to worship God as they wish; and yet a third group goes further in saying the Bahá'ís must be assisted, since they are the cause of progress and development of the world. In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly speaks of these disputes and disagreements:

Through that Call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause.

No sooner had that Revelation been unveiled to men's eyes than the signs of universal discord appeared among the peoples of the world, and commotion seized the dwellers of earth and heaven, and the foundations of all things were shaken.[14]
Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Verily a grace hath appeared exceeding all other blessings in creation, if ye be of them that harken. Say: O people! Dispute not concerning Him, do not follow the

dictates of your vain imaginings, and be not of them who have turned away.[15]
Bahá'u'lláh

Disagreements and disputes concerning the Bahá'í Faith have also occurred among the followers of all other Faiths. Sura 78 an-Naba' ("Announcement") alludes to the behavior of the people of our time in a delicate and new way.

In the Qur'án, *an-Naba' al-'Aẓím* ("the Great Announcement") has two meanings:

- The Great Announcement, the Great News
- The Great Messenger, the Great Announcer

The Great Announcement concerning which people disagree — Qur'án 78:2–3

Say: He is a Great Announcement. — Qur'án 38:67

You shall surely learn of His Announcement after a while.. — Qur'án 38:88

According to a ḥadíth attributed to Imám Ṣádiq:

> [The Promised One] does not appear except that the people of assurance express doubts regarding Him. And he held to the following Verse: Say: He is a Great Announcement from Whom they turn away [Qur'án 38:67–68].[16]

In the following verses, His Holiness, the Báb, uses "the Great Announcement" to mean "the Announcer", "the Messenger":

> *O QURRATU'L-'AYN! Say: Verily I am the One Who is hailed in the Mother Book* [the Qur'án] *as the 'Great Announcement'. Say: The people have grievously differed over Me, whereas in truth there is no difference between Me and the Báb; and God, the Eternal Truth, is sufficient witness.*[17]
> The Báb

Since the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith, people of the world have engaged in debates and disputes concerning it. There are strong differences of opinion. Some Muslims think it is necessary to kill Bahá'ís, while other Muslims have sacrificed their lives because of their belief in it. In the first century of the Bahá'í Faith nearly 400 great Muslim scholars accepted the Faith of the Báb. These devoted believers penned a number of books to demonstrate the truth of the station of that Promised One. And, despite the danger to their lives, they engaged with great courage in the propagation of His Faith. Such detachment from the comfort and glory of this world, and such generosity of spirit and courage on the part of these clerics have been unmatched in previous human history.

Bahá'u'lláh invites the people of the world, particularly the clerics, to weigh any matter in the "balance" or with the touchstone of God, and eschew all division and disunity.

> *Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: ... Beware, lest ye make it a cause of dissension amongst you.*[18]
> Bahá'u'lláh

According to God's promise, whatever Muslims disagree over, God will make clear on the Day of Resurrection or at the time of the Manifestation of the Promised One:

> On the Day of Resurrection [the Rising of the Messenger of God],We shall surely make clear to you whatever you disagree upon [is the cause of dissention among you] Qur'án 16:92

> Surely He [God] will make clear to them the truth of Him over Whom they differ; and the deniers [of the Resurrection] shall realize the falsehood of their words. Qur'án 16:39

> On the Day of Resurrection God will judge between you concerning that about which you disagree. Qur'án 22:69

In former times, a Messenger would be sent to individual ummahs (Qur'án 35:24, 16:36, 10:47). However, according to God's Plan, in this dispensation, i.e. at the time of the fulfillment of the "Great Announcement", all nations must forsake division and become united and live in harmony even as the members of one body. The "Great Announcement" is a reference to the appearance of a Messenger Whose religion has a world-embracing vision, and its aim is the spread of unity throughout humanity and the establishment of the Great Peace. Can any greater announcement than this be imagined?

> *Say: O friends! Suffer not yourselves to be far removed from the ocean of heavenly grace. He is come astonishingly near unto you. He Who had been concealed from men's eyes is now come. How good is His coming! In one hand He is carrying the water of life and in the other the charter of true liberty. Cast ye away one thing and take hold of another. Cast away whatsoever pertaineth to the world and take firm hold of that which the hand of divine providence imparteth unto you. Lo, that which no eye hath ever beheld is now revealed.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

God's Greatest Name

Not only is our time the Great Day of God and the Messenger of our time the "Great Announcement" of God, the name of our Messenger is also the Great Name of God. Many attributes have been associated with God in the heavenly scriptures. God has chosen one of these attributes as His Name, has referred to it as "The Greatest Name" and has bestowed it upon the Promised One of our time. That unique attribute and that Great Name of God is Bahá'; it occurs four times in the first verse of the Muslim Du'á' as-Sahar (Dawn Prayer).

> *Acknowledge the exalted character of the name of the Lord, your God, Who hath come unto you in the greatness of His glory. He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Possessing, the Supreme Protector.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In truth, He is the Light and Glory of God unto them who are in the Kingdoms of Revelation and Creation; and the Lamp of Guidance for all that are in the heavens and the earth.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

The Muslim Pre-Dawn Prayer is a magnificent and elegant prayer in praise and glorification of God, attributed to Imám Riḍá, who has explained that Imám Muḥammad Báqir used to recite it at the dawn of each day during the month of

Ramaḍán. In this prayer a number of attributes and names of God are mentioned. The first is Bahá'.

> O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy **Splendor** [Bahá'] at its most Splendid [Abhá'], for all Thy Splendor [Bahá'] is truly resplendent [bahiyyu]. I, verily, O my God! Beseech Thee by the fullness of Thy Splendor (Bahá').
>
> O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy **Beauty**, at its most beautiful, for all Thy Beauty is truly beauteous. I, verily, O my God! Beseech Thee by the whole of Thy Beauty.
>
> O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy **Glory** in its supreme Glory, for all Thy Glory is truly Glorious. I, verily, O my God! Beseech Thee by the totality of Thy Glory.
>
> O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy **Grandeur** at its supreme Grandness, for all Thy Grandeur is truly Grandiose. I, verily, O my God! Beseech Thee by the fullness of Thy Grandeur.
>
> O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy **Light**, through all of its Lights, for all Thy Light is truly Luminous. I, verily, O my God! Beseech Thee by the whole of Thy Light.

The five attributes used at the beginning of this prayer—Splendor, Beauty, Glory, Grandeur and Light are some of the meanings of Bahá'.

Najafí, a powerful Mujtahid of Isfahan and a relentless enemy of the Bahá'í Faith, forbade people from chanting the Pre-Dawn Prayer.

> *The ignorant one of the world* [Shaykh Najafí] *forbade the people the chanting of it* [the Dawn Prayer].[22] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *The iniquity of the despots hath waxed so grievous that they have forbidden the people the chanting of the Dawn Prayer.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *In the name of God, the Most Glorious! All praise, O my God, be unto Thee; I invoke Thee with a prayer spoken by the tongue of Thy Messengers and Thy chosen ones, and beseech Thee by Thy Name by which those that are near unto Thee besought Thee aforetime.... I call upon Thee saying: "O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are, verily, glorious". "O my God and my Beloved! This is the Name with which ... Thou hast adorned Thine own Self, O Thou the Lord of the Realms of Names. Thou hast commanded all to intone it at the dawn of each day, that perchance none endued with insight may be veiled from Him. I ask Thee, then, by this Most Great Name, to make me firm in His love and His good pleasure, in such wise that I may set my face towards none but Him, cling only unto Him, and approach naught but His presence.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *Say: O people of the world! Verily, the Most Great Name hath appeared. Rejoice with exceeding gladness and set your hearts and minds towards Him.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

Shaykh Bahá'í* was the first to discover this mystery, so he chose this name for himself and to sing God's praises:

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* Bahá' ad-Dín Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-'Ámilí (also known as Shaykh Bahá'í) (1547–1621) was an Arab Iranian Shí'ih Islamic scholar, philosopher, architect, mathematician, astronomer. He adopted the pen name (takhallus) Bahá' after being inspired by words of Imám Muḥammad al-Báqir (the fifth Imám) and Imám Ja'far aṣ-Ṣadíq (the sixth Imám), who had stated that the Greatest Name of God was included in the Du'á' Bahá' (also known as Du'á' as-Sahar).

The Greatest Name that none recognizeth
The Lord of all names, it ought to be

The many meanings of Bahá' testify to the majesty and magnificence of this unique and matchless word:

> Splendor, luminosity, brightness; fairness, beneficence, goodness; beauty; perfection; adornment, decoration; pomp, grandeur, magnificence; majesty.[26]

According to Muḥammad Mawáhid, who was a master of the Arabic language, no word could be found in Arabic to possess the greatness of the word Bahá' as it embodies the choicest meanings. It seems that from eternity the name Bahá' ("the Greatest Name" of God) was predestined to be bestowed upon the Promised One of our age. The following verses of the famous poet, Ferdowsi, given in an outline below, also alludes to this "Greatest Name":

A great one will come in the future,
From the valley of the warriors,
A man of purity and good nature,
Who will cause God's religion to spread
to four corners [of the world];
The world will find safety from evil;
He will reflect the "Glory of God"

According to a ḥadíth from *Uṣúl al-Káfí*:

> Ibn-i-Sinán related: I asked Imám Ṣádiq about the interpretation of the phrase Bismi'lláhi'r-Raḥmáni'r-Raḥím.* He said: "B" is for Bahá', "S" is for God's Saná' ("Dignity"), and "M" is for God's Majd ("Greatness").[27]

Other Muslim scholars and mystics have also referred to the name Bahá' in their books. For example, Mírzá Javád Malikí, regarding the interpretation of the first two letters of Bismi'lláh ar-Raḥmán ar-Raḥím, relates from Imám Ṣádiq that "B" is for God's Bahá' (meaning Bahá'u'lláh), "S" is for God's Saná' ("Dignity"); then he explains that according to traditions, "A" refers to God (Alláh), and "B" alludes to the First Creation or First Light, which has been interpreted as "Bahá'u'lláh".

In the Traditions, "Bahá'u'lláh" has been described with the following titles:

The First Mind	The Paradise
The Most Exalted Pen	The Whole of God's Self
The Blessed Tree	The Mother Book[28]

The Báb praises Bahá'u'lláh in ways that are beyond description:

> *THE glory of Him Whom God shall make manifest is immeasurably above every other glory, and His majesty is far above every other majesty. His beauty excelleth every other embodiment of beauty, and His grandeur immensely exceedeth every*

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* *Bismi'lláhi'r-Raḥmáni'r-Raḥím* ("In the Name of God, the Most gracious, the Most Merciful") appears at the start of all suras, except Sura 9, and constitutes the first verse of Sura 1 in the traditional order.

other manifestation of grandeur. Every light paleth before the radiance of His light .... His names are superior to all other names.[29] The Báb

The timing of the Promised Ones

Sura 38 Ṣád—the sura that informs us of the coming of the two great Promised Ones—also informs us of the year of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and the period between the appearance of the Báb and that of Bahá'u'lláh:

> Indeed, you will learn of His "Announcement" after the passing of "a time".
> Qur'án 38:88

It is amazing that the last two digits of the year of the manifestation of the "Great Announcement" are embodied in the word *ḥín* ("a time"). The Arabic alphabet (or Arabic *abjad*) consists of 28 consonants, each with a numerical value. The numerical value of *ḥín* = 8 + 10 + 50 = 68. Hence, *ba'da ḥín* ("after a time") is = 69.

God fulfilled His "Promise" (see chapter 7) in exactly the year prophesied: the Islamic year AH 1260 (CE 1844).

The Glorious Qur'án informs us that we will hear the news of His appearance *ba'da ḥín*; this promise was fulfilled with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh; nine years after the Manifestation of the Báb (in AH 1260), Bahá'u'lláh privately declared His Mission, in the dreadful dungeon prison of Tehran.

The Manifestation of the first Promised One (in the year 60)	AH 1260
The Manifestation of the second Promised One (after *ḥín*)	AH 1269

With what amazing skill and precision has the year of the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our age been 'hidden in plain sight' in one short sentence and under the cover of hint and allusion! Could the use of *ba'da ḥín* ("after a time") in the above verse be merely a coincidence?

> *Reflect upon the mention of "after Ḥín"; perchance .... The erring may seek the straight Path and be led to the Most Great Announcement.*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

The following ḥadíth connects the above verse (Qur'án 38:88) to the appearance of the Qá'im:

> Surely ye will learn of His announcement ba'da ḥín ["after a time"], He explained: After the appearance of the Qá'im.[31]

Siyyid Káẓim Rashtí asked his mentor, Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í,* concerning the appearance of the Promised One. In response he said:

> I can say no more; I can appoint no time.[32]

Then he mentioned the following verse of the Qur'án:

> Indeed, He is the Remembrance to all the people of the world. And ye shall surely learn of His Announcement after a time [*ba'da ḥín*]. Qur'án 38:87–88

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* Two great Muslim scholars who prepared their followers to recognize the Báb.

It is clear that the verses that include "the Great Announcement" and "the Remembrance" inform us of the fulfillment of a "Great Announcement". What announcement could be greater and what glad-tidings more joyous than the Manifestation of the Promise of the world? Otherwise:

Who is "He" Who comes as a Reminder to the people of the world?	38:87
Who is "He" Whose Announcement we will hear after "a while"?	38:88
Who is "He" Who is called "the Great Announcement"?	38:67
Who is "He" from Whom people will turn away?	38:68
About "Whom" do the people debate and dispute?	78:1-5
What is "the Announcement" over which people have disagreement?	78:1-5
What is "the Announcement" which the people will surely know?	78:1-5
What "Announcement" will be fulfilled in due time?	6:67
Concerning what "Announcement" will people be soon informed?	6:67

The matters discussed in Sura 38 Ṣád appear to be disconnected. However, their inner meaning, like a story, allude to the spiritual destiny of humanity and the events of our Day.

The topic that connects the various matters in Sura 38 Ṣád is the story of Iblís* (Satan), recounted in a unique style of language. According to this story, all the angels bow to the will of God except Iblís who chooses the path of haughtiness and infidelity. For this reason, God sent Iblís away and told him that he will be cursed till "the Day of Religion". Iblís asked God for a reprieve until the "Day of Appointment" or the "Day when They will be chosen". God replied: I will give you a respite till "the appointed Day and the fixed time". Iblís said: "By Thy Might, I will mislead all people except those with pure intention." (Qur'án 38:82-83). The Lord replied: "This is just .... Hence, I will fill Hell with you and your followers. (Qur'án 38:84-85)†

Many wisdoms are hidden in this story. For instance, the compassionate Creator allows a new grace period for the haughty, meaning the self-conceited leaders of religion. This Day is the Day of the Appointment of the two Messengers of our time; it is the Day when God bestows on humanity a new Religion (the Day of Religion).

These verses also remind us that the recognition of God's Chosen Ones is conditional; the most important and most necessary condition is having an

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* Iblís or "Satan" is the representative, manifestation or spokesman for the haughty, powerful, and deceitful leaders of religion who usurp God's religion and consider themselves lord over it. The role of such leaders is to mislead the imitating followers and move them away from God.

† Jesus also taught His followers many divine mysteries through short stories. As we shall see, Sura 18 Kahf is an example.

illumined heart and pure intention. The righteous shall never be misled; they will not be deceived by self-conceited leaders.

After the story of Iblís, Sura 38 Ṣád ends with the following verses:

> I shall not ask you for a reward [for this guidance], and I shall not take your responsibility upon Myself. [The meaning of this verse is that guidance is from God and responsibility to investigate and accept is upon us]
>
> He is not but a Reminder [of the Great Announcement] to the people of the world.
>
> And surely you will know of His [Great] News after a while [after "Ḥīn", i.e., year 69].
>
> Qur'án 38:86–88

A similar verse was also revealed in Sura 12 Joseph:

> Thou shalt not ask for a reward [for this guidance]. He is not but a Reminder for the people of the world. Qur'án 12:104

It is important to note that verses 86-88 in Sura 38 Ṣád begin with the first person singular and end in the third person masculine singular. In Qur'án 12:104 the topic begins with second person masculine singular ("Thou shalt not ask ..."), and ends in third person masculine singular. In addition, in referring to *Dhikr** ("Remembrance") and the coming of the "Great Announcement", the pronoun "He" is used.

> He ... is the Reminder (12:104) [His aim is to remind]
>
> He ... is the Reminder (38:87) [His aim is to remind]
>
> He is a Great Announcement. Qur'án 38:67
>
> You will hear of His Announcement [in due time]. Qur'án 38:88

It is clear that these verses give us the glad-tidings of the coming of two Messengers named "The Remembrance" and "The Great Announcement", and that the first one appears to remind and prepare the people to receive the "Great Announcement", and the second appears to proclaim and reveal that "Announcement".

The following verse indicates that a number of people persist in rejecting God's "Remembrance" as long as they have not tasted of the torment of the eternal world:

> They are doubtful regarding My Remembrance; they have not yet tasted My torment. Qur'án 38:8

The next verse speaks of the reward for those accepting the Promised One:

> This is a reminder, and indeed, a pleasant ending awaits the righteous. Qur'án 38:49

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* *Dhikr* means to remember, remembrance, mention something, praise.

Again, we see that, according to God's testimony, righteousness is a prerequisite for recognizing the Promised One. This truth has been repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'án and the heavenly scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith.

For many Muslims the news of the appearance of a Messenger after Muḥammad is astonishing. These Muslims have accepted the meaning of *Khátam an-Nabiyyín* ("the Seal of the prophets") as "the last of the Messengers", without search or reflection. The following verse refers to the lack of expectation on the part of most Muslims:

> Are you surprised that a "Remembrance" has come to you from your Lord?
> Qur'án 7:69

The Qur'án also alludes to the followers of the Báb, calling them "the people of the Remembrance". It advises faithful Muslims that if they have difficulty understanding God's Words, it is befitting that they ask "the followers of the Remembrance". After the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, "the followers of Remembrance" were called "the followers of Bahá'". However, since Bahá'ís also believe in the Báb, the title "followers of the Remembrance" also applies to them:

> Ask the followers of the Remembrance, if you do not understand [a matter].
> Qur'án 21:7 & 16:43 (tr. 1)

> If you do not understand [the meaning of "the Remembrance"], ask "the followers of the Remembrance.
> Qur'án 21:7 & 16:43 (tr. 2)

The following verses speaks of someone named *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") Who is inviting the people to God; but they respond by mocking Him; just as in the previously mentioned verses, these verses also clearly show that *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") is the name of a person, and not a reference to a book.

> When they hear the words of "the Remembrance", they say: Indeed, He is a lunatic; whereas, He is not but a Reminder for the people of the world.
> Qur'án 68:51–52

In the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the titles the "Great Announcement" and the "Greatest Announcement" have been used in reference to His own Revelation. It is befitting to mention a few additional examples:

> *By the righteousness of God, ye have been created to glorify this Most Great Announcement, this Perfect Way which lay hid within the souls of the Prophets, which was treasured in the hearts of the chosen ones of God and was written down by the glorious Pen of your Lord, the Possessor of Names.*[33]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Give ye ear unto the counsels of Him Who admonisheth you for the sake of God. He hath in truth created you, hath revealed before your eyes that which exalteth you and promoteth your interests. He hath made known unto you His straight Path and hath acquainted you with His Great Announcement.*[34]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: Fear ye God, then observe equity in your judgement of this Great Announcement before which, as soon as it shone forth, every momentous announcement bowed low in adoration.*[35]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Render thanks unto thy Lord for having aided thee to embrace His Cause, enabled thee to recognize the Manifestation of His Own Self and raised thee up to magnify Him Who is the Most Great Remembrance in this glorious Announcement.[36]
Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by the righteousness of God! Verily this is the Primal Point, arrayed in His new attire and manifested in His glorious Name. He at present beholdeth everything from this Horizon. Indeed, He is supreme over all things. Amongst the Concourse on High He is known as the Most Great Announcement and in the Realms of Eternity as the Ancient Beauty, and before the Throne by this Name.[37]
Bahá'u'lláh

God's Great Remembrance

The aim and purpose of the twin Messengers of our time is one, and the glad-tidings of the heavenly Books apply to both of them. However, the titles "Announcement" or "Great Announcement" have been used, primarily, to refer to Bahá'u'lláh. As we saw, He repeatedly refers to Himself as the "Announcement", "the Great Announcement", and the "Greatest Announcement". The titles *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") and "Great Remembrance" have primarily been used to refer to the Báb. The Báb repeatedly called Himself *Dhikr* ("Remembrance"), "Great Remembrance", the "Most Great Remembrance" and the "Remembrance of God". It is befitting to examine some of the Writings of the Báb that include the word *Dhikr* ("Remembrance"). The following samples are from the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá,* a Book written in Arabic as an interpretation of Sura 12 Joseph.

O people of the earth! Whoso obeyeth the Remembrance of God and His Book hath in truth obeyed God and His chosen ones and he will, in the life to come, be reckoned in the presence of God among the inmates of the Paradise of His good-pleasure.[38]
The Báb

O concourse of divines! Fear God from this day onwards in the views ye advance, for He Who is Our Remembrance in your midst, and Who cometh from Us, is, in very truth, the Judge and Witness.[39]
The Báb

Such as are the true followers of Islám would say: 'O Lord our God! We have hearkened to the call of Thy Remembrance and obeyed Him. Forgive us our sins. Thou art, verily, the Eternal Truth, and unto Thee, our infallible Retreat, must we all return.'[40]
The Báb

With each and every Prophet Whom We have sent down in the past, We have established a separate Covenant concerning the Remembrance of God and His Day.[41]
The Báb

O peoples of the earth! Verily His Remembrance is come to you from God after an interval during which there were no Messengers, that He may purge and purify you from uncleanliness in anticipation of the Day of the One true God; therefore seek ye whole-heartedly divine blessings from Him, inasmuch as We have, in truth, chosen

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* *Qayyúm* means "self-standing"; *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá* is "The Self-Subsisting Lord of All Names", a supreme name. This title primarily refers to the "Greatest Name", i.e. Bahá'u'lláh.

Him to be the Witness and the Source of wisdom unto all that dwell on earth ....[42]
The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh has used the titles *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") and "My Remembrance" for the Báb.

... be not of those who grievously erred when My Remembrance came unto them at the bidding of the Almighty, the All-Praised.[43] Bahá'u'lláh

... the Most Great Gate and the Most Perfect Remembrance ....[44] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb has also called the Promised One coming after Himself, i.e. Bahá'u'lláh, the "Remembrance of God".

He is the Remembrance of God in that Dispensation.[45] The Báb

This is the Most Great Remembrance through Whom the "greatest joy" hath been manifested in the world.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

In the Qur'án, *Dhikr* has been used in many verses and with different meanings. Some of the verses refer to the Qur'án, others to the remembrance of God or to the Promised One of our time. Muslim interpreters have been and continue to be unaware of the truth of the other meanings. For example, they associate the following verses with the Qur'án itself, whereas they primarily refer to the Revelation of the Báb:

Is not it the time for the hearts of the believers (Muslims) to be humbled before the Remembrance of God and that which hath been revealed by God, the true one? .... Know ye that God shall revive the earth after its death. Indeed, We explain to you Our verses, perchance ye may reflect upon them. Qur'án 57:16–17

The first verse invites Muslims to humble themselves before the "Remembrance of God" and His Revelation. Clearly, Muslims are already humble before the Qur'án. They only display haughtiness towards writings they consider unworthy or of little value.

Besides, in these verses God refers to the death of the "earth". What "earth" dies? The "earth" of the people's hearts; it is this "earth" that in the "Last Days" (end of time) loses the spirit of life; and, watered by the appearance of the new religion of God, is revived; it is such an "earth" that is in need of humility and servitude to the Lord. In a delicate way, the previous verses demonstrate that many Muslims will not easily accept the "Remembrance of God", and instead of expressing servitude and humility before His exalted station and His matchless utterance, they come to Him with hearts filled with arrogance and disdain.

Verse 39 of Sura 41 Fuṣṣilat also uses "earth" to mean the "heart" to convey a similar meaning. Let us examine a few verses of that sura:

If some of the people act with disdain, others who are near to thy Lord will engage in praise and worship .... Qur'án 41:38

Explanation: Those who are "near to thy Lord" are the believers who recognize the Promised One and converse with Him. According to Qur'anic

verses, the Promised One of our time appears with the name "The Lord".* One of the titles of the Báb is the "Exalted Lord"; the previous verse indicates that there will be two groups of people: one group recognizes the Promised One (the Lord) and the other group treats Him with arrogance.

> One of His signs is that thou seest the earth humble; but whenever We send down rain upon it, it is revived and developed .... Qur'án 41:39

Explanation: What "earth" can show humility? The "earth" of the human heart. Only that earth is capable of expressing such qualities and virtues. What rain will fall on this earth? The rain of God's grace and bounty. The verse continues:

> Indeed, the One Who revives it [the earth] is the Giver of life to the dead. Indeed, He has power over all things. Qur'án 41:39

Explanation: This verse brings our attention back to the spiritually dead and living, and proves that the primary topic in these verses is the spirit that can only be revived through humility and meekness. Just as an elevated terrain cannot retain water, an arrogant spirit is not capable of benefitting from the "water of life".

> Those who distort Our signs [from their true meaning] are not hidden from Us .... They are those who deny the Remembrance when He comes to them; He is an exalted Book. Qur'án 41:40–41

Explanation: In a delicate way, verse 41 refers to those who distort the meaning of prophecies related to the *Dhikr* ("the Remembrance")—the signs for the recognition of the Promised One of our age. However, the "Remembrance" is a powerful and invincible "Book" capable of overcoming the distorters, since the mysteries of God's power are inscribed on the tablet of His spirit.

The "Mother Book" is the Most Great Spirit of God:

> *The Mother Book is made manifest, summoning mankind unto God, the Lord of the worlds.*[47] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Mother Book hath lifted up its Voice, but the people are bereft of hearing.*[48] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: I swear by God! The Hidden Book hath been manifested in this Ancient Temple.*[49] Bahá'u'lláh

> No false or vain words can be found in His utterance (no falsehood can approach His court) .... Whatsoever He reveals is from God, the All-Wise, the All-Praised. Qur'án 41:42

Explanation: Verse 41 refers to the future—it gives the news of the appearance of One Who does not speak on His own behalf.

The next verse indicates that the people will reject their Promised One (the *Dhikr*).

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* This matter will be discussed in detail in chapter 13.

> If God, the true one, followed their [the people's] selfish desires, the heaven and the earth and their inhabitants would be corrupted; rather We manifested their Remembrance [Dhikr]; but they turned away from their Remembrance [Dhikr]. Qur'án 23:71

It has always been the wish of the people to recognize their Promised One with their eyes, and not with their heart and soul; they have asked Him to subdue the laws of Nature, not to conquer their hearts. Christians expect their Promised One to descend from the heaven; the Shí'ih are awaiting their Promised One to come up from a well! If God obeyed the wishes of the people, the divine plan would be corrupted; instead of sending a miracle to fascinate them, God has sent a Remembrance to capture their souls. Alas, the eyes of most people are fixed on miracles.

However, recognition of the Messengers based on miracles has never been, and will never be, the will of God. Bahá'u'lláh asks His followers not to degrade the purity and exalted station of the religion of God by relating miracles attributed to Him.

Reflecting and meditating on the divine verses, teach us that the recognition of the Promised One of our time depends on the quality of our heart, not on our high station or the vastness of our knowledge; the attributes that have been most emphasized are humility and meekness. If the earth of the heart be deprived of these heavenly qualities it will not be capable of nurturing the seed of faith and of gaining eternal life.

The last verse of Sura 41 Fuṣṣilat alludes to the meeting of "the Lord" (*Rabb*).

> Know that they are in doubt concerning the meeting of their Lord. Qur'án 41:54

The name of Sura 21 al-Anbiyá' ("the Prophets") refers to the news hidden in it. The "News" has been linked to the appearance of the *Dhikr* (the "Remembrance"):

> We have written in the Book of Psalms that after (the appearance of) the Remembrance [Dhikr], My righteous servants shall inherit the earth; truly, in this verse there is a message for the pious. Qur'án 21:105–106

Those who are the object of God's grace and mercy will benefit ("inherit") from His gifts and bounties. This expression is also an allusion to the fulfillment of God's Plan and the establishment of the new world-embracing Order of the Faith of God.

Three verses later, the Qur'án speaks of "the Promise" and the denial of the Promise:

> If they turn away [from this news], say: I have warned you all alike, but I do not know if the time of the Promise is near or far. Qur'án 21:109

The following verses from the Psalms clearly show that the intended "Promise" and "Announcement" in the Sura 21 al-Anbiyá' are related to guidance, and that meekness and fear of God are necessary to be guided:

> Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior .... He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way .... Who then is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him ... and his descendants will inherit the land. Psalm 25:5–13

> But the meek will inherit the land .... Those the Lord blesses will inherit the land. Psalms 37:11, 22

One of the most important Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*; it provides an explanation of the mysteries of former heavenly Books. It ends with the following verses from the Qur'án:

> And whoso shall withdraw from the remembrance of the Merciful God, We will chain a Satan to him and he shall be his fast companion. Qur'án 43:36

> And whoso turneth away from My remembrance, truly his shall be a life of misery. Qur'án 20:124 (both as quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 257)

Next, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *Thus hath it been revealed aforetime, were ye to comprehend.*[50] Bahá'u'lláh

For further contemplation and reflection, it is fitting to refer to the Qur'án and see what other verses accompany the previous two verses.

> These [Satans] turn them [the people] away from the Path [of God]. But they [the misled] imagine that they are of the guided. And when he [the misled one] comes to Us [on Judgment Day], he says [to his evil companion]: Would that there were a distance of east to west between me and thee [Satan, who represents the self-conceited and arrogant leaders of religion]; what an evil companion had I! [We will say to the misled]: This day, no one will rescue you, if you have done evil; indeed you are companions in torment. Can thou [Muḥammad] make the deaf hear, or the blind see, or guide the clearly misled? ... He is a Remembrance to Thee and Thy people [Muslims]; soon you shall be asked to account for your deeds. Qur'án 43:37–44

> ... on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind. [On that Day] He will say: "Lord! Why hast Thou raised me up blind, when I had sight?" He [God] will say: "When Our signs and Our guidance came to you, you ignored them; thus art thou also forgotten today." Qur'án 20:124–126

In Sura 20 Ṭá Há', God again reminds and sternly warns those who deny the Remembrance of God:

> Indeed, a Remembrance has come to you from Our Presence. Whoso turns away from Him will, on the Day of Resurrection, carry a heavy burden; there [in Hell] he will eternally abide. How grievous will be that burden on the Day of Resurrection! Qur'án 20:99–101

The same warning has been mentioned in the Writings of the Báb:

> *Unto those who deny the verses of God, after He Who is God's Remembrance came unto them with signs and verses ... do thou announce a sure torment, as decreed by God.*[51] The Báb

> *Say: Whoso turneth away from My Remembrance, shall, in the Book; be condemned as the Evil One, whereby he will be consigned to the depths of darkness.*[52] The Báb

But on that Day, the unbelievers will be deprived of attaining the Presence of the Remembrance of the Name of your Lord.[53] The Báb

Let us continue by studying the remaining verses of the Sura 43 al-Zukhruf:

Shall We then take away from you Our Remembrance, since you have transgressed your bounds? Qur'án 43:5

Explanation: The above verse asks us this question: Since many people are not worthy of recognizing the Promised One, should God leave them without guidance? This verse, once again, gives us the title of the Báb (Remembrance), and informs us that Muslims will not recognize the exalted station of the "Remembrance". Why have these deniers been called transgressors? Because they have exceeded the bounds of their knowledge and understanding; instead of asking, the Promised One, the meaning of the verses of the Qur'án, they consider themselves the source of knowledge.

How great the number of the Prophets whom We sent to the people in former times! But whenever a Prophet came unto them, they mocked Him. Qur'án 43:6-7

Explanation: These verses confirm and repeat the point made in the previous verse, and teach us that insulting God's Messengers has been the way of the people. Since human nature does not change, such behavior will continue in the future.

The next quote refers to one named the Remembrance whom the people cannot bear to see or hear. In order to deny and belittle Him, they claim that He is insane. According to historical documents, these verses were inscribed above the door of the Báb's place of business:

And indeed, those who disbelieve would surely almost make Thee stumble with their [evil] look. When they hear [the words of] the Remembrance, they say: "He is a lunatic". Yet He is not but a Remembrance [a Reminder from God] to [the people of] the worlds.

Qur'án 68:51–52 (tr. 1)

The deniers of Truth [because of envy] want to strike You (the Promised One) with their eyes. Whenever they listen to the Remembrance, they say: He is insane. He has come only to remind the people of the world.

Qur'án 68:51–52 (tr. 2)

The verses of the Qur'án regarding the appearance of the *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") in "the Last Days" are many. The number of these verses and their clarity make it easy for the seekers of Truth to investigate. The following verse has been repeated four times in Sura 54 al-Qamar (The Moon):

We have made the Qur'án easy for [the recognition of] the Remembrance. Is there anyone who will take counsel? [Is there one then who will recognize the Remembrance?] Qur'án 54:17, 22. 32, 40 (tr. 1)

We have made it easy to recognize the Remembrance through the Qur'án. Is there one among you who will take counsel? Qur'án 54:17, 22. 32, 40 (tr. 2)

Is one whose heart God has opened to Islám [submission to the Will of God] and has been illumined by the Light of God [like the hard-hearted]? Woe to those

whose hearts are hardened against the Remembrance of God! They are clearly misled. Qur'án 39:22

We will know God through His words

Our Creator—through the Tongue of His Messenger, Bahá'u'lláh—counsels us hundreds, nay thousands of times, and invites us to accept the Path of Truth and eternal prosperity.

O dwellers of the realms of God! The Incomparable Friend hath appeared unveiled .... While there is yet time, seek to commune with the Immortal Beloved and turn towards the Face of the Lord.[54] Bahá'u'lláh

This is the Promised One Who hath been announced in all the heavenly Books and scriptures.[55] Bahá'u'lláh

O friends! Strive that ye may receive a portion of the Ocean of Divine favour, and partake of the harvests of infinite grace and bounty. This is the Day of labour and the time of deeds. Do not deprive yourselves. It is the season of freedom; free yourselves from the chains of self and desire.[56] Bahá'u'lláh

We fain would hope that in this resplendent morn, when the effulgent rays of the Sun of divine knowledge have enveloped the whole earth, we may all attain unto the good pleasure of the Friend and drink our fill from the ocean of His recognition.[57] Bahá'u'lláh

O people of the earth! Whoso obeyeth the Remembrance of God and His Book hath in truth obeyed God and His chosen ones and he will, in the life to come, be reckoned in the presence of God among the inmates of the Paradise of His good-pleasure.[58] The Báb

Say: O people! Verily, this Most Exalted Pen moveth by the Finger of the power of your Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious; this is not of Me but from God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.[59] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 43.
2 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 167, p. 80.
3 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 103. (prov. tr.)
4 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 91. (prov. tr.)
5 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167.
6 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74.
7 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 70, paragraph 4:10.
8 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 141— prov. tr.
9 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 62. (prov. tr.)
10 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 264. (prov. tr.)
11 Quoted in the *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 104.
12 Mihdí-i-Maw'úd, tr. Bahár'ul-Anwár, vol. 13, pp. 282–283.
13 Biḥáru'l-Anvár al-Jámi'at Lidurur li'a'ímat al-aṭhár, vol. 53, p. 103.
14 *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, no. 178, pp. 295–296.
15 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, Brazil (1986), p. 54. (prov. tr.)
16 Gheybat-i-Nu'mání. Translated by Ghaffárí p. 459.
17 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 74.
18 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 136–137.
19 *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, pp. 967–968.
20 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 160.

21 Risáliy-i-Ayyám-i-Tis'ih, p. 32. (prov. tr.)
22 Asrár'ul-Áthár, vol. bi-th, p. 87. (prov. tr.)
23 Asrár'ul-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 133. (prov. tr.)
24 Majmú'iy-i-Munáját Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, pp. 45–46. (prov. tr.)
25 Jinnat'ul-Ma'wá A'nnafs'ul-Kullyat'ul Iláhyyah, p. 205. (prov. tr.)
26 *Mu'ín Dictionary* (Persian)
27 *Uṣúlal-Káfí*, translated into Persian by Siyyid Javád Mustafaví, vol. 1, p. 154.
28 Tafsíru'l-Qur'ánu'l-Karím (Ṣadrá), vol. 1, p. 477.
29 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 110–111.
30 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 205. (prov. tr.)
31 Ta'wílu'l-Áyát'uz-Záhirat, p. 499.
32 Twelve Table Talks Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akka, #10
33 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103.
34 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 121.
35 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 248.
36 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 181.
37 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 182.
38 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 43 (Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, chap. 1)
39 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 44.
40 *Selections form the Writings of the Báb*, p. 44.
41 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 68.
42 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 62.
43 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 13.
44 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh Hadrat-i-Bahá'u'lláh, printed in Egypt, p. 78. (prov. tr.)
45 Persian Bayán, p. 317. (prov. tr.)
46 Asrár'ul-Áthár vol. 4, p. 501. (prov. tr.)
47 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 247.
48 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 244.
49 Asrár'ul-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 439.
50 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 257.
51 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 43. (prov. tr.)
52 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 11. (prov. tr.)
53 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. ??— prov. tr.
54 Ad'iyyih-i-Ḥadrat-i-Maḥbúb, p. 315. (prov. tr.)
55 Áyát-i-Eláhi, vol. 2, p. 306. (prov. tr.)
56 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 38 prov. tr.
57 Tabernacle of Unity, p. 10.
58 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 43.
59 Amr va Khalq, published by Bahá'í Publishing, Germany, 1985, p. 357. (prov. tr.)

9
Contemporary Messengers—united and harmonious

God has honored our era with the manifestation of two Promised Ones referred to as "the Lord". Such a great favor and bounty has never before been bestowed upon humanity. It is astonishing that most people are either completely unaware of this great gift of God or what they know is based upon the vain imaginings and groundless suspicions of the fanatical and the ignorant.

> *O servant of God! Turn thou away from the stranger, that thou mayest recognize the Friend. He indeed is a stranger who leadeth you away from the Friend. ... Suffer not the words of the foe to hold thee back from the Friend or the insinuations of the enemy to cause thee to forsake the Beloved.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

The following warning by Bahá'u'lláh is to those who follow ignorant leaders:

> *O servants! ... accept ye not the words of every guide. How numerous the guides who have gone astray and failed to discover the straight Path! He alone is a guide who is free from the bondage of this world and whom nothing whatsoever can deter from speaking the truth.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Announcing the appearance of another Messenger

In the Bayán, the Báb bestows on Bahá'u'lláh the title "*Him Whom God shall make manifest*". Sometimes, He even mentions the title "*Bahá'u'lláh*":

> *Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.*[3] The Báb

> *Well is it with him who, when yielding up his soul to God, is a believer in Him Whom God will make manifest.*[4] The Báb

In the Writings of the Báb, the first priority was preparing His followers for the recognition of the next Promised One. He repeatedly warned His followers to learn from former generations, to abandon vain imaginings and prejudices, and not to hesitate to accept "*Him Whom God shall make manifest.*

Tarry not in accepting Him. If ye hesitate or tarry on that Day, ye will be the companion of the Fire and know it not.[5] The Báb

The word "Fire" has been used in heavenly scriptures to symbolize "remoteness from God". We are all familiar with fire and well know its dangers. It is the Will of God that we appreciate the danger of the Fire of remoteness from Him in the same way, but even more fully. For our life in this world is very short; in the end, our bodies turn into dust. However, our life in the eternal world is without end; if we do not gain the gift of eternal life in this world we

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* The Order of Bahá'u'lláh is a reference to God's universal Plan for the establishment and administration of a united and harmonious world.

have indeed unknowingly entrusted our souls to the Fire of extinction. According to God's testimony, it is impossible to compensate for this loss.

In our mind, we must accept remoteness from God or being deprived of intimate relationship with our Creator, as equal to being exposed to a Fire—a fire that envelops our soul while we are completely unaware of its existence. Our lack of awareness of the danger is in itself a great danger. How great the number of people who appear to be in perfect health, but suddenly hasten to the other world. The Báb repeatedly warned and reminded us that our soul may often be in the Fire of remoteness from God, burning with fever, while we are unaware of it.

> *On that Day thou wouldst regard thyself as the inmate of Paradise and as a true believer in Him, whereas in reality thou wouldst suffer thyself to be wrapt in veils and thy habitation would be the nethermost fire, though thou thyself wouldst not be cognizant thereof.*[6] The Báb

Two "unacquainted" and intimate friends

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were not acquainted with one another and never met; but the degree of Their love and respect for one another is beyond description, and cannot be encompassed by the human mind.

Even though these two great Messengers were both honored by God with the title of "the Lord", yet in Their Writings They spoke to each other with great humility and servitude. The Báb had no other wish but to sacrifice His life in the path of Bahá'u'lláh, and in the end, achieved His desire. Have you ever heard of a person whose only desire was to sacrifice his life in the path of another whom he had never seen? Such love and sacrifice between two "unacquainted" souls is one of the great wonders and rarities of existence. It is perhaps unprecedented, and by itself, another proof of their truth.

> *O THOU Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love.*[7] The Báb

> *Verily, We desire to sacrifice Our Self in His path, even as He sacrificed Himself in My path.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *We stand, life in hand, wholly resigned to His will; that perchance, through God's loving kindness and His grace, this revealed and manifest Letter may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point, the most exalted Word* [the Báb].[9] Bahá'u'lláh

These two Messengers have spoken in praise of each other:

> *I SWEAR by the most holy Essence of God—exalted and glorified be He—that in the Day of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest a thousand perusals of the Bayán* cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by Him Whom God shall make manifest.*[10] The Báb

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* The Bayán is one of the major Writings of the Báb.

I swear by the glorious Sun of Oneness that one word from the utterances of that Manifestation of names and attributes of God is, in the sight of the Most Glorious Beauty, more beloved and loftier than whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth; how much less these servants who are as nothing before a word from Him, and are humbled before that which hath been manifested from that Tree of Truth, the Sun of bounty and the Moon of loving-kindness.[11] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by the most sacred Essence of God that but one line of the Words uttered by Him is more sublime than the words uttered by all that dwell on earth. Nay, I beg forgiveness for making this comparison.[12] The Báb

In the Kitáb-i-Badí', Bahá'u'lláh repeats the previous quote about the Báb. (Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 55)

In the Bayán, the Báb repeatedly expresses His servitude, love and affection towards His Beloved and contemporaneous Promised One. He states that whatever exists in creation is insignificant compared to the Promised One's magnificence and glory.[13]

Whatever is in the Bayán is a gift from God to Him Whom God shall make manifest.[14] The Báb

Indeed, any man whose eye gazeth upon His Words with true faith well deserveth Paradise; and one whose conscience beareth witness unto His Words with true faith shall abide in Paradise and attain the presence of God;[15] The Báb

He is the Origin of all things.[16] The Báb

It is a sufficient source of glory and honor for anyone to be accepted by Him ... through a mention of his association with Himself.[17] The Báb

Should one who is the remotest from Him believe in Him, he would become nearest unto Him.[18] The Báb

It is impossible for any human being to comprehend the intensity of love and affection between the two Promised Ones. The degree and expression of love, affection and kindness between Them is beyond the scope of human understanding:

He is My Best-Beloved, and I am His Best-Beloved; He is My Self and I am His Self. Whatsoever I utter is His most wondrous, sweet, holy, and sublime utterance... Say: I, verily, live by His life and move by His love, inasmuch as He, verily, lived through My life and breathed naught but My remembrance and praise amidst creation.[19] Bahá'u'lláh

By God! Were I to speak His praises untill the end that hath no end, it would not quench My heart's desire for the mention of His names and attributes -- how much more of His holy, glorious and beauteous Self.[20] Bahá'u'lláh

I move not save by His good-pleasure, as He moved not save at the good-pleasure of this Youth.[21] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by God, beside Whom there is no God! I, verily, arise at dawn in the remembrance of Him, and spend every eve engaged in His praise; I move not but for His love, and breath not save in service to His Cause.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

By God, the True One! He will never part from Me; He is My Soul's companion, and I am the companion of His pure, All-encompassing,, Glorious and All-Powerful Soul.[23]
Bahá'u'lláh

PRAISE be to God that He hath enabled us to become cognizant of Him Whom God shall make manifest in the Day of Resurrection, so that we may derive benefit from the fruit of our existence and be not deprived of attaining the presence of God. For indeed this is the object of our creation and the sole purpose underlying every virtuous deed we may perform.[24]
The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh's love for the Báb was such that He would continually shed tears in pain of separation from Him:

I shed tears at all times because of My separation from Him.[25] Bahá'u'lláh

The oneness and unity of these two Promised Ones is such that they are and continue to be as one Soul.

... on that Day the Point of the Bayán (the Báb) is none other than Him Whom God shall make manifest (Bahá'u'lláh)[26]
The Báb

... it is He Who hath revealed the Bayán prior to His Own manifestation.[27] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh identified Himself as the One Who was suspended in the air and was the target of bullets, whereas this had happened to the Báb:

In My first Manifestation ... they suspended Me in the air and injured Me by bullets of envy and enmity ... and no one considered wherefore I accepted such harm from My servants.[28]
Bahá'u'lláh

Who is the Speaker of these words? The Speaker is the Great Spirit of God. That One and Peerless Spirit, Who in every age appears in a new Name; appeared in His first Manifestation for this age as "the Báb" or the Exalted Lord; and in His second Manifestation He was named "Bahá'u'lláh".

Here again, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Báb as "My first Manifestation":

Observe, when My first Manifestation appeared with the name, the Most-Exalted, the All-Knowing betwixt earth and heaven and rent the veil asunder, the divines of the age arose in opposition and enmity.[29]
Bahá'u'lláh

In the following verses, Bahá'u'lláh calls the Báb "the Exalted 'Alí" or "'Alí":

Suspend not, once more, the Beauty of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the Most High in the air of enmity.[30] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: This is in truth the same 'Alí He verily, hath appeared once more in this Most Pure, Most Manifest, and Most Glorious Beauty.[31]
Bahá'u'lláh

A prayer of Bahá'u'lláh in devotion and praise of the Báb:

The praise of God and His glory be unto Thee, O Thou the Glory of God and the Beloved of Bahá! And, moreover, the glory of the dwellers of the Kingdom on high and the inhabitants of the cities of eternity, the glory of all things and the glory of Thy Self be unto Thy Self, as well as the glory of this Bahá Who hath been manifested for the sake of Thy triumph among the dwellers on earth.

I swear by Thy might and Thy glory, O Beloved of Bahá'! Thou hast not fallen short of Thy mission to teach Thy servants to direct Thy people; and in all this, Thou didst desire naught but their meekness before the True Sovereign, and their humbleness before the manifestation of the lights of Thy Face.

By Thy glory, O Thou My Best-Beloved! I find Myself shamed by what Thou hast proclaimed regarding My Manifestation, in such wise that Thou hast breathed naught except in My praise, uttered no words save in confirmation of My Cause, and caused naught to flow from Thy Pen except that it further thine aim to remember and glorify Me... At all times, Thou hast manifested whatsoever was a proof of My Own Self, a clear evidence of My Manifestation, and a sign of My Beauty.

Notwithstanding all this, how can I mention Thy praises, O My Best-Beloved? I swear by Thy might! A torrent of decrees and a succession of misfortunes have not denied Me a single moment to shed tears on My Own behalf, much less to praise of Thine Exalted and August Self.[32] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh penned *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* to demonstrate the truth of the station of the Báb. At the end of this Book He directs our attention to several points. For example, He asks us: *"Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart"* would a man be capable of uttering that which *"all the leaders of nation and government protest against him"?* Where did a 25-year-old youth gain such power that He could stand up, with perfect courage and constancy, to thousands of obstinate enemies, not afraid of risking His life or sacrificing Himself?[33]

Among the proofs of the truth of the Messengers of God is Their perseverance and constancy in the face of tyranny and misfortune. In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh calls on us to meditate on how the Promised One (the Báb) in the prime of youth embarked on the propagation of God's Religion, and with what constancy He stood up to His obstinate enemies and detractors. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that the more they persisted in persecuting and harassing Him, the greater His love and eagerness became; till at last, He yielded up His life to the Beloved, and hastened to the eternal world.

Again, Bahá'u'lláh invites us to contemplate and to ask ourselves: Where did all this strength, power and victory come from? A short time after He proclaimed the Cause of God, the signs of influence, power and sovereignty of this Promised One of God became manifest in all the cities; the resistance of the masses, particularly the divines and the powerful, to prevent and censure Him was of no avail.

How many stainless hearts and sanctified souls were put to death in the cruelest way by the workers of inequity? *"Such was the potency and transmuting influence which He exercised over them, that they ceased to cherish any desire but His will".* Notwithstanding all the cruelties, *"each of these holy beings, up to his last moment, breathed the Name of God, and soared in the realm of submission and resignation".*[34] Bahá'u'lláh

Then Bahá'u'lláh states: *"Reflect: Who in this world is able to manifest such transcendent power, such pervading influence?"*[35] These devoted souls were never afraid of the workers of tyranny and, with complete resignation, accepted the arrow of fate; in time of misfortune, instead of complaining, they engaged in

praise and thanksgiving, and drank the cup of martyrdom as honey and nectar. It seems that patience found existence in their patience, and faithfulness in their faith.

Again, Bahá'u'lláh speaks to us:

> *Do thou ponder these momentous happenings in thy heart, so that thou mayest apprehend the greatness of this Revelation, and perceive its stupendous glory. Then shall the spirit of faith, through the grace of the Merciful, be breathed into thy being, and thou shalt be established and abide upon the seat of certitude.*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

Then He explains to us that this same opposition of the people, and the perseverance of the faithful in the face of misfortune, is in itself a strong evidence of the truth of the Promised One:

> *Whenever thou dost meditate upon the cavils uttered by all the people, be they divines, learned or ignorant, the firmer and the more steadfast wilt thou grow in the Faith. For whatsoever hath come to pass, hath been prophesied by them who are the Mines of divine knowledge, and Recipients of God's eternal law.*[37] Bahá'u'lláh

Other signs and announcements

Most people are intensely occupied with the affairs of this world. To be negligent of God and busy with the affairs of this world is, and has always been, the way of people:

> Most of the people are heedless of Our signs [verses]. Qur'án 10:92

> Say: I have come with proofs from my Lord, but you deny it [My proofs]. Qur'án 6:57

> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' Matthew 23:29–30

> If the Book [of God] had been revealed for us, we would have been guided better than them [the former deniers]. .... Who is more unjust than he who considers false the verses of God. Qur'án 6:157

Is it rational to imagine that, suddenly in our age, the habits of sinfulness, negligence, love of the world, tyranny, and repudiation will be replaced by worship of God, knowledge, justice and faith? Sura 6 *al-An'ám* informs us in detail about the appearance of the two Promised Onesof our age, and clearly discloses that their fate will be the same as former Messengers. In that sura, the Tongue of Revelation informs us of the *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") in this way:

> Your people [Muslims] will deny Him, whereas He is the Truth. Say: I am not responsible for you [your denial]. Qur'án 6:66

The same sura teaches us that the aforementioned Announcement is about the future:

> For the fulfillment of each Announcement a specific time has been set. And soon you will know. Qur'án 6:67

Another three verses from the same sura prophesy the resistance of the deniers against Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One Who will be calling the people to God from the Abode of Peace. This was a title given to Baghdad, the city from which Bahá'u'lláh declared His Manifestation to His followers. (6:125–127). The inevitability of this occurrence is emphasized further on in the Sura:

> Verily what you are promised is sure to come and you cannot escape it. Qur'án 6:134

The Tongue of Revelation then instructs the believers not to contend with the deniers of God's Promise, not to waste their time in pointless debates with them, and even not to choose these short-sighted people as companions:

> And when you see those who engage in idle talk about our verses, turn away from them until they engage in a different discussion. Qur'án 6:68

> And if Satan [the evil suggestions of the deceitful and faithless people] cause you to forget [God's Covenan]), after [the manifestation of] the Remembrance [Dhikr] do not seek the companionship of the unjust [deniers of the Dhikr]. Qur'án 6:68

Many people do not trust themselves to recognize the truth; their way is to imitate not to investigate. In the previous verse God advises such people that the way to salvation is to keep away from the temptation of the unjust, meaning the deniers of the Promised One. Why have these deniers been called unjust? What injustice is greater than preventing the pure-hearted and simple-minded people from accepting God's greatest gift? What injustice is greater than following the way of Satan instead of following the way of the angels?

Then God specifies the limit of the responsibility of the believers in the new Faith:

> The God-fearing believers are not responsible for the deniers but only to remind [about the appearance of Dhikr]; perhaps they [the deniers] shall become God-fearing. Qur'án 6:69

> And leave to themselves all those who have taken their religion as a plaything and distraction; and who have been deluded by the life of this world. But remind [them] about Him [the Promised One]. Qur'án 6:70

Next the tongue of Revelation (Qur'án 6:84–86) mentions 17 Prophets and Messengers:

Isaac	Job	Zachariah	Ishmael	Jacob
Joseph	John the Baptist	Elisha	Noah	Moses
Jesus	Jonah	David	Aaron	Elijah
Lot	Solomon			

The number of these Prophets and Messengers together with the two Promised Onesof our age is 19. Number 19 is God's chosen number in the Qur'án. This subject will be discussed in detail in chapter 12.

After the mention of these 17 Prophets and Messengers, the Qur'án, using the word "They" announces the appearance of the future Messengers, including the

two Promised Ones of our age, and also mentions *Dhikr* ("Remembrance"), the title of the Báb:

> Those are the ones to whom We gave the Book, authority, and Prophethood. If they [a group of people] deny it [their Religion], then We entrust it to **[another] people** who will not deny it [their Religion]. God hath guided them [the believing people]; follow them then [benefit from their guidance]. Say: I ask for no reward. It is but a reminder [*Dhikr*] for the worlds.. Qur'án 6:89–90

The Tongue of Revelation again testifies that the "Remembrance of God" shall come with a new Book; and His *Ahl adh-Dhikr* (people of the Remembrance, i.e. His followers) will discover many mysteries of the Qur'án with the help of His Books:

> If you do not know of a matter ask the people of the Remembrance [*Ahl adh-Dhikr*]. [Because] their words are based on clear proofs and heavenly Books. We have sent you the Remembrance [*Dhikr*] to explain to people whatever hath been revealed to them, perchance they may perceive. Qur'án 16:43–44

Dhikr ("Remembrance") is a special title of the Báb, but it has also been used to refer to Bahá'u'lláh. In the following utterance Bahá'u'lláh is called the *Dhikr*:

> *Say: O people! I admonish you wholly for the sake of God, and seek no reward from you. For My recompense shall be with God, Him Who hath brought Me into being, raised Me up by the power of truth, and made Me the Source of His remembrance amidst His creatures.*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

Verse 24:25 also confirms the verses of *Sura* 16 *an-Naḥl*:

> On that Day, God will bestow on them His true Faith. Qur'án 24:25

> *Notwithstanding all the verses of the Qur'án, and the recognized traditions, which are all indicative of a new Faith, a new Law, and a new Revelation, this generation still waiteth in expectation of beholding the Promised One who should uphold the Law of the Muḥammadan Dispensation.*[39] Bahá'u'lláh

The prophecies of the Qur'án have also been confirmed by the utterances of the Imams. Many Islamic Traditions inform us that the Promised Qá'im will bring a new Faith and a new Book:

> The Qá'im will rise with a new Cause, a new Book, and a new Decree. [His appearance] will be difficult for the Arabs.[40]

> When the Qá'im rises, He will have a new Call, as did the Apostle of God.[41]

> Out of Baní-Háshim there shall come forth a Youth Who shall reveal new laws. He shall summon the people unto Him, but none will heed His call. Most of His enemies will be the divines.[42]

> When the Qá'im rises, He will summon all anew, as did the Apostle of God.[43]

The Báb is an independent Messenger of God with His own Book. He is also considered to be one of the Imams, and connects the faith of Islám with the Bahá'í Faith.

Even though the two Promised Ones of our age are independent Messengers, yet their aim and purpose is one. Both have come to establish the foundation of faith, the love of God, and the spread of unity among the people of the world.

The verses of the Qur'án and Islamic Traditions clearly show that the Qá'im (the Promised One) will step on the world stage with a new Book and new Laws. These verses themselves should settle the issue of *Khátam an-Nabiyyín* ("Seal of the Prophets") and leave no doubt for anyone that God's way of sending Messengers is not subject to change.

Who can recognize God's *Dhikr* and become of the "people of the *Dhikr*"? How could such seekers obtain the gift of faith?

> These are those whom god has guided; then follow thou these believers (Ahl adh-Dhikr). Say: I seek no reward from you. He is only a Remembrance (Dhikr) for the people of the world. Qur'án 6:90

The prophecy about the denial of the two Promised Ones of our age is hidden and manifest in the Qur'án:

> These are the verses of the Book and the One Who has come to thee from thy Lord [the Promised One] is the Truth; but most of the people do not believe. .... He [God] will direct His Cause and explain His verses [signs], perchance you may be certain of meeting your Lord. Qur'án 13:1–2

> The Truth has come and the Cause is manifest, but people refuse to believe. Qur'án 9:48

> *All awaited the fulfillment of God's Promise, in the Day of God; however, when the Promise came to pass, they denied it.*[44] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Wherefore do ye hear the verses of God from the tongue of God's Remembrance, yet turn away?*[45] The Báb

If denial of the Messengers of God has always been the way of the people, why would they change in the future?

It is befitting to end this chapter with the following beautiful verses of the Qur'án and examples of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

> About what are they disputing? About the Great Announcement .... Surely, they will soon know; then [again] surely, they will soon know. Qur'án 78:1–5

> For every Announcement a time has been fixed, and you shall soon know. Qur'án 6:67

> Surely you will hear of His Announcement after *Ḥín* [a while, i.e.after the year 68]. Qur'án 38:88

Even with all these verses and signs concerning the appearance of the two Promised Ones, named "the Great Remembrance" and "the Great Announcement", most Muslims are not aware of the Puzzle of the Qur'án and its meanings. God wants us to bring the Great News to the people of the world:

> *Arise to serve the Cause and inform the people of this Great Announcement.*[46] Bahá'u'lláh

The verses that have been mentioned testify that the Day of Expectation has ended. It is befitting to be joyful about these glad-tidings and this matchless News, and to be thankful to God that we have been given such a great gift and are enjoying such a great bounty and grace.

I swear by your true Lord, by Him Who is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth, that the divine Promise concerning His Remembrance is naught but the sovereign truth and, as decreed in the Mother Book, it shall come to pass ....[47] The Báb

*Verily I am the Qá'im Whose appearance ye have been promised.** [48] The Báb

According to a report by a believer who accompanied the Báb on His pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, the Báb held the ring on the door of Ka'ba in His hand and with a loud voice repeated the above utterance three times.[49]

We shall know God by His Words

Just as we can easily recognize our parents by their voices, we can also recognize the Voice of the Creator of the universe by what He says and how he says it, and distinguish God's utterance from the sayings of others.

Say: Yes, by My Lord! I am ignorant of all things except what God hath, through His bountiful favor, been pleased to teach Me.[50] Bahá'u'lláh

We, verily, command you ... to what exalteth your station and promoteth your best interest in every world of the worlds of your Lord .... We have not created you for your own selves but for service to the Cause of God, the Lord of the worlds.[51] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O My servants! In this Day, you must rend asunder all veils and obliterate all vain imaginings.[52] Bahá'u'lláh

The incomparable Friend saith: The path to freedom hath been outstretched; hasten ye thereunto. The wellspring of wisdom is overflowing; quaff ye therefrom.[53] Bahá'u'lláh

O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.[54] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Whosoever denieth this Cause shall find that none of his deeds is acceptable, and God, your Lord, can well dispense with all His creatures.[55] The Báb

Clear proofs have come to you from your Lord. Whosoever perceives, it is for his own salvation, and whoever remains blind, it is to his own loss. Qur'án 6:104

O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?[56] Bahá'u'lláh

This is the Most Great Announcement and the Great Cause. Know ye its value and be fair in your judgement of what hath been revealed .... Strive, while there is yet time and the Cause is manifest, not to deprive yourselves.[57] Bahá'u'lláh

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* In the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures, many verses have been revealed concerning the manifestation of the two contemporary Messengers of God; this author has compiled those verses in chapters 14 & 15 of *Lord of Lords*.

This Day, the Ocean of knowledge is surging, and the Sun of wisdom is resplendent; hearken and draw nigh, that ye may live forevermore.[58] Bahá'u'lláh

Dissipate not your lives; seize your chance .... Your days are passing, swift as the lightning; strive, that perchance ye may attain the light of true Oneness.[59] Bahá'u'lláh

O ye servants of the Merciful: By God! the Cause hath come to you from your Lord.[60] The Báb

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, gr 5.3 & 5.5, pp. 72–73.
2 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, gr 4.11, p. 70.
3 Quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, nb. 189, p. 247.
4 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 44. (prov. tr.)
5 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 278. (prov. tr.)
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 83.
7 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 59.
8 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 390. (prov. tr.)
9 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 252.
10 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 104.
11 The Kitáb-i-Badí' (prov. tr.)
12 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 100.
13 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, chapter 15, unit 3.
14 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 72. (prov. tr.)
15 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 99.
16 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 317. (prov. tr.)
17 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 73. (prov. tr.)
18 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 321. (prov. tr.)
19 The Kitáb-i-Badí', pp. 141–142. (prov. tr.)
20 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 44. (prov. tr.)
21 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 394. (prov. tr.)
22 The Kitáb-i-Badí', pp. 58–59. (prov. tr.)
23 Áṯhár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 2 (compendium of vol. 2, 3 & 4), p. 384. (prov. tr.)
24 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 110.
25 Munáját: Majmú'iy-i-Áṯhár va Ad'íyyih min Áṯhár-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 31–32. (prov. tr.)
26 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 95.
27 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 104.*
28 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 222. (prov. tr.)
29 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 185. (prov. tr.)
30 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 176. (prov. tr.)
31 Asráru'l-Áṯhár, vol. 5, p. 200. (prov. tr.)
32 The Kitáb-i-Badí', pp. 232–233. (prov. tr.)
33 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 18.
34 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 235.
35 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 235.
36 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 236.
37 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 237.
38 Áṯhár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 4, p. 299. (prov. tr.)
39 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 239 (gr270)
40 Fará'id, p. 294. (prov. tr.)
41 Fará'id, pp. 296–297. (prov. tr.)
42 Kitáb-i-Arba'ín, quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 242.

43 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, p. 191.
44 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 296. (prov. tr.)
45 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 403. (prov. tr.)
46 Kitáb-i-Mubín, p. 354. (prov. tr.)
47 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 58.
48 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 245. (prov. tr.)
49 Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, by Muḥammad 'Alí Faízí, p. 142. (prov. tr.)
50 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 122–123 (no. LXV)
51 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 208, 209. (prov. tr.)
52 Iqtidárát va Chand-Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 170–171. (prov. tr.)
53 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, gr1.15, p. 9.
54 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169.
55 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 347. (prov. tr.)
56 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 131.
57 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 2. (prov. tr.)
58 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 184. (prov. tr.)
59 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, pp. 156–157. (prov. tr.)
60 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', p. 110. (prov. tr.)

Part 5
Prophecies regarding historic events in the Bahá'í Faith

This part contains three chapters:

10. **Sura 18 the Cave: The Companions**
11. **Sura 18 the Cave: The Báb**
12. **Sura 74 al-Muddaththir: The enemies of God's plan**

Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation. .... No man, however, can comprehend this except he who is possessed of an understanding heart.[1]

Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 174.

10
Sura 18 the Cave: The Companions

... observe how all these things have been foretold.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

The signs of the coming of two Messengers in our time are manifested and hidden throughout the Qur'án. Sura 18 al-Kahf ("The Cave") is an important source of these signs. In that sura, the time of the appearance of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and many other historical events of the Bahá'í Faith have been incorporated in the story of "the Companions of the Cave". In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, which has been revealed in proof of this Faith, Bahá'u'lláh states:

Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation. .... No man, however, can comprehend this except he who is possessed of an understanding heart.[2] Bahá'u'lláh

The above statement is an indication that there are many evident and hidden mysteries in verse 18:17 and its accompanying verses regarding the story of the Companions of the Cave:

The discovery of the hidden treasures in this mysterious sura was only made possible with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith and the fulfillment of many promises made in the Qur'án.

Bahá'u'lláh also quotes the following well-known verse of the Qur'án in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, as a proof of the above statement:

> There is nothing wet or dry that is not in the clear Book. Qur'án 6:59

The following Qur'anic verse concerning the "Hour" (a reference to the "Hour of Manifestation") confirms Bahá'u'lláh's statement:

> The unbelievers say: "the Hour* will not come for us." Say: Yea, by my Lord Who has knowledge of the secrets, and not even the smallest thing, in heavens and on earth, is hidden from him! Nothing exists, smaller or greater [concerning the Hour] that is not in the "clear Book'. Qur'án 34:3

In "The Four Valleys", Bahá'u'lláh states the following concerning verse 18:17:

> If a soul could grasp the allusions that lie hid in this single verse, it would suffice him. Such indeed are those whom He hath extolled as "men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God".

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* The "Hour" is a reference to the appearance of the Promised One.

The above statement is an indication that there are many evident and hidden mysteries in verse 18:17 and its accompanying verses regarding the story of the Companions of the Cave:

The discovery of the hidden treasures in this mysterious sura was only made possible with the appearance of the Baha'i Faith and the fulfillment of many promises made in the Qur'an.

The verses of the Qur'an, a Book filled with mysteries regarding the two Promised Ones of our time—the Bab and Baha'u'llah—are like a puzzle. This puzzle consists of countless pieces related to a beautiful design that have been separated and mixed together. The aim of *Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án* is to highlight these pieces and to reassemble the beautiful design. Every verse of the Qur'an that you see in this book is a piece of that puzzle.

One might ask: What is the proof of the validity of the mysteries unearthed in this story? Is there any further proof necessary other than the fact that these prophecies agree with the historical events of the Baha'i Faith? If we break a design or jigsaw apart into hundreds of pieces and spread them out on a table, would it be possible for each piece to accidentally be located in its proper place in the design? If such an occurrence is possible, then an accidental agreement between the prophecies of the Qur'an and the historical events of the Baha'i Faith is also possible.

Since many of the prophecies of Sura 18 al-Kahf ("The Cave") are related to the history of the Baha'i Faith, your ability to benefit from this chapter is to some degree dependent upon your knowledge of the events of the first Baha'i century. It is my hope that, through the grace and favor of God, many other researchers will step into the arena and discover other mysteries hidden in this beautiful and profound story; since God's Word has many meanings, and whatever is presented in this book is only one of the "seventy and one" meanings.

Interpretation of God's Words

Before examining the announcements in Sura 18 al-Kahf, it is necessary to take a brief look at the matter of "interpretation". Do we, the poor servants of God, have the permission or the ability to interpret and comprehend the inner meanings of the Word of God, in particular, the "allegorical verses"? The Qur'an answers this question:

> None knoweth the meaning thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge. Qur'án 3:7

In the above verse, reference is first made to God, then to those who are firmly established in knowledge. What the Messengers reveal is from God; therefore "those firm in knowledge" refers to interpretations other than in the Word of God, such as are provided by the Hebrew Prophets and the Imams.

Is it possible for ordinary believers to also enjoy a portion of this divine grace and bounty? The following Qur'anic verse reveals the requirements:

> Those among them [the believers in former religions] firm in knowledge, and the believers [in Islám] are those who believe in whatever had been revealed to you and revealed before you. Qur'án 4:162

Hence, "those firm in knowledge" are believers who are so steadfast and established in faith, reliance and love of God, that wavering, doubts and misgivings never enter their minds. Such believers see God with an inner eye and soul, as brilliant as the sun, clear and evident.

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh explains that the Messengers' Words are of two kinds: one is clear speech, unveiled and without allusions; another is speech that is veiled and hidden in mystery. The purpose of the mysterious Words of the Messengers is to test people. After this explanation, He links an understanding of the allegorical verses to the degree of faith and purity of the heart of the believers, not to their education or knowledge.

> *None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.*[3]

Before the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith, many of the mysteries in the Qur'án were hidden. In this age, by the Will of God, the veil of mystery has been lifted from these utterances. According to Bahá'u'lláh's testimony in *The Gems of Divine Mysteries*, those believers in this Faith who have reached the heights of guidance and knowledge, through the bounty and grace of God, are also able to grasp the mysteries of the allegorical language:

> *Know thou that the passages that We have called "ambiguous" appear as such only in the eyes of them that have failed to soar above the horizon of guidance and to reach the heights of knowledge in the retreats of grace. For otherwise, unto them that have recognized the Repositories of divine Revelation and beheld through His inspiration the mysteries of divine authority, all the verses of God are perspicuous and all His allusions are clear. Such men discern the inner mysteries that have been clothed in the garment of words as clearly as ye perceive the heat of the sun or the wetness of water, nay even more distinctly.*[4]

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that the "appearance of the Words" of God is the treasury of Truth, and their inner meanings are pearls of divine knowledge. The Almighty God prevents the people from discovering those meanings until such time as God Wills that the seal be removed from the scroll of divine revelation; afterwards, people are granted access to those pearls and can discover the mysteries of the Word of God.[5] In another utterance, He states that until the hand of divine Power removes the seal from the divine knowledge, no one will be able to understand them:

> *Until the hand of the power of My previous Manifestation removed the seal from the treasuries of the knowledge of the Qur'án, none comprehended their meaning.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *He appeared and manifested whatsoever was hidden in the treasuries of knowledge and lay concealed beneath the Seal of protection.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

In the heavenly scriptures we repeatedly read: "O God disclose to us the mysteries of the scriptures". If it were not permitted or even necessary to comprehend these mysteries, how would the Creator teach us to seek His aid in attaining such a great gift and virtue?

> *Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Words of God are allusions, mysteries .... They are mines of gems; a mine is always hidden.*[9] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

> *If a hundred pens were to engage in writing not all questions could be addressed .... Therefore, the friends of God must turn unto the Kingdom on High and seek infinite grace that they may discover the mysteries, and truths, and that inner meanings be made manifest.*[10] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

> *Search deeply within the noble Qur'án and the glorious Gospel. This is incumbent upon all.*[11] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

We must bear in mind that the Word of God has many meanings. Discovering some of the pearls in this Sea, may help us to discover others.

> *The Word of God encompasseth every meaning; in it are hidden all meanings and divine mysteries. Blessed be he that attaineth unto the Word of God and discovereth the pearls hidden therein.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh relates two Islamic Traditions in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*:

> Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people.
>
> We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain.[13]

In an interpretation of Qur'án 30:1–5, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that these verses have unnumbered meanings; then He explains one of the perspicuous meanings and nine "allegorical" meanings hidden in those five verses.

We must also admit that we, as humble servants of God, are unable to even understand some of the "fundamental" utterances of God, how much less the "allegorical" Words of that treasury of mysteries. Only the Messengers, Prophets and Imams are able to give us the keys to understanding the "allegorical verses"; **only with their help and by applying the keys are we able to grasp the hidden mysteries in those Words.**

Wisdom accompanied by humility and servitude is a clear sign of faith and the love of God. God's Word teaches us to keep these criteria in mind. In the shelter of God's protection and guidance, we must weigh any statement with our intellect and the power of reason; if it is compatible then accept it, otherwise discard it.

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that we must employ the power of reason—this is a gift from God to His servants, as a lamp; and with its aid enter the dark corners of the Word of God, perchance we may, by the grace of God, reach the fountain of life.[14]

> Give the glad tidings to those servants who hear the words and choose the best of them. God guides such people and they are endued with understanding.
>
> Qur'án 39:17–18

As an example, let us consider one allegorical word. The word "fire"—this word has been used as the manifestation of the power of God in the Messengers, and also to signify the manifestation of the wrath of God, in both worlds, toward the sinful and the unbelievers.

One of the important aims of the Messengers is to destroy superstitions and prejudices. Let us see how Christ explained that goal:

> I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled.
>
> Luke 12:49

> I have come to set fire to the earth. Luke 12:49 (NEB)

Is not this fire meant to purify people from the prejudices and superstitions that had been growing in their hearts; and to burn the veils of separation, ignorance and selfishness?

In the following utterance the word "fire" has two meanings:

> *O My servants! Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicolored hyacinths of My knowledge. Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart. Be light and untrammeled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.*[15]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

What is the meaning of "the flame of fire" in the following utterance of Bahá'u'lláh?

> *Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies ....*[16]

What powers would we find in the flame of fire?

- Provides warmth (love and affection)
- It burns (destroying)
- Purifies (purification from prejudices and vein imaginings)
- Signifies power and prevalence (perseverance and steadfastness in the face of opposing forces)

Which of the above meanings for "fire" are more reasonable in the previously stated utterance of Bahá'u'lláh? Of course we must be kind to our enemies and strive to help purify their hearts; but in facing enemies, manifesting power, resistance and perseverance are most necessary.

In the face of danger, expressions of power and courage, instead of weakness and remorse, on the part of the devoted believers, like a storm, increases the fire of anger and violence in the hearts of the enemies of the Faith of God. Hundreds of stories have been recorded in history of the expression of power and courage

(heroism), on the part of the believers in the Bahá'í Faith, when facing oppressors and torture-mongers.

> *Reflect on how, In this Most Great Manifestation, each one hath hasted with perfect eagerness and resignation to the place of sacrifice, offering up his soul to the Incomparable Friend .... Such heroic actions only increased the villainy of the enemies.*[17]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Great is the blessedness of the courageous whose hearts have not been weakened by the attacks of the oppressors.*[18]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Over twenty thousand followers of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, whether in former times or these days, stood up as blazing fires in the face of their oppressors; they did not utter a word of repentance or entreaty. Their faces were set ablaze by the fire of calamity; the intensity of the wrath and violence of the enemy intensified the fire of their love to such an extent that it confounded the executioners, and blazed the fire of envy in the hearts of the enemies and the oppressors.*

The expression **"the fire of hell"**, meaning remoteness or separation from God, has been repeatedly used in the heavenly scriptures. Can any misery or bitter pain more burning than separation or remoteness from the source of love and joy—the compassionate Creator—be imagined? Non-existence or not being born in this world is much more preferable to existing while constantly burning with the sorrow of separation.

> *In this Day a great festival is taking place in the Realm above; for whatsoever was promised in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled. This is the Day of great rejoicing. It behoveth everyone to hasten towards the court of His nearness with exceeding joy, gladness, exultation and delight and to deliver himself from the fire of remoteness.*[19]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Fire has often been used in the sacred verses to indicate love and affection:

> *The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame!*[20]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *The fire of the love of God is in this Day manifest and visible in the world.*[21]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Be as brilliant as the light and as splendid as the fire that blazed in the Burning Bush. The brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth, whilst the fierceness of the flame of enmity and hatred cannot but result in strife and ruin.*[22]
> Bahá'u'lláh

In the Faith of Zoroaster, fire served as a special symbol. For this reason many followers of Shí'ih Islám consider the Zoroastrians to be fire worshippers.

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* "Fire" in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh has many meanings: fire of enmity, of religious prejudice, fire of hell, fire of separation, fire of love, the Flame of Eternal Fire (a reference of the Messengers), a fire that burns the veils of negligence, fire of tests, fire of self and passion, fire of revenge, fire of denial, fire of eagerness, fire of oppression, fire of the hearts, fire of anger, fire of hope and fire of the love of God.

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh rejects this accusation and testifies to the Truth of that great Messenger:

> *You have asked Me regarding His Holiness Zoroaster. He hath come from God charged with guiding the people. The fire of the love of God is set ablaze by His hand. He appeared with the fire of the love of God, and a Book of divine laws and commandments. However, this heedless people did not appreciate His station nor did they recognize His Revelation. Because of their heedlessness and folly, the Shí'ihs denied Him.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh

Allegorical words in the heavenly Scriptures create beauty and diversity of thought. If such diversity does not cause differences and contentions, they bring great advantages, as they broaden the scope of knowledge, and the power of thought and imagination; without such a beautiful and multi-colored attire, the poetry and prose of the world would be like trees without leaves or blossoms, completely losing their richness and purity.

When dealing with languages, we can derive various meanings from one word. For example, a whole book may be written about the differences between "interpretation" and "explanation", expressing different or even opposing views. In such a discussion, what is especially important is the intention of the speaker and the consequences of his speech. Explanations and interpretations are of two kinds: positive and negative. If we selfishly use the Word of God to create division among people and to deny the Truth, then we are responsible in the court of God for the results and are deserving of punishment. In that case, there are no differences between explanation, interpretation and elaboration. Whatever we call our words, the result is the same. For example, Christ said that He came from heaven. If we do not explain what is meant by "heaven", then we are failing in our duty to truth. Here an explanation of the allegorical language is necessary, not an interpretation.

Careful study of the divine Words clearly demonstrates that both interpretation and elaboration are necessary to prove the Faith of God. However, interpretation and explanation for the purpose of creating division among the believers, or to deny God's Words are both unacceptable and prohibited. But if we express a view with pure intention and for the sake of proving a truth, whether we call it interpretation or elaboration, it is acceptable and praiseworthy; because if we are mistaken in our understanding, in the end, the light of knowledge will make the error apparent and will guide us to the straight path. In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that not all elaborations are the same:

> *Interpretation is limitless in its range. One interpretation is according to the good-pleasure of God, another repudateth Him Who is the Truth.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

The purpose of knowledge is attainment to the "object of knowledge", i.e. the recognition of Truth:

The purpose of all interpretations, elaborations and explanations of the Words and Verses of God is the attainment to the knowledge of the True One.[*] [25] Bahá'u'lláh

Introduction to Sura 18 al-Kahf

With regards to simile and allegory, Sura 18 al-Kahf ("The Cave") and the Revelations of St. John occupy the highest ranks. In these two mysterious works allegorical discourse reaches the summit of perfection. Perhaps it is for this reason that, in the course of centuries and ages, these two works, more than any other writing, have excited the curiosity of people. Many scholars and thinkers have stepped forward and striven, through powers of thought and imagination, to reach the summit of these two mountains that conceal many mysteries that perchance they may uncover the hidden gems and present them to the lovers of knowledge and literature.

In the holy Writings of the Bahá'í Faith the details of Sura 18 al-Kahf are not interpreted; but these Writings give us the keys to the meaning of only some of the verses of the sura:

Say: This is the Cave wherein the Youths of Eternity found refuge and said: "O our Lord! Lead us to the straight Path. Thou art the Forgiving, the Most Merciful. We heard their call and sheltered them therein, and made them a reminder to the people of the world. Say: This is the same cave wherein Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, found refuge from the hands of the people of malice.[26] Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, the Companions of the Cave were servants who attained a great victory; they took refuge in the Cave of the mercy of your generous Lord; where they fell asleep to the world and were awakened by the fragrance of the love of God. They took shelter in this Cave, a refuge for the righteous, the shelter of the religion of your Lord, the Unconstrained. The Sun of Reality separateth them unto the right and left side.[27] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Sura 18 al-Kahf is one of the most mysterious divine scriptures within which there are many hidden meanings. In some of His Writings, which in themselves are in need of interpretation, the Báb symbolically relates some of the verses of this sura to His own Manifestation.

We could relate the story of the Companions of the Cave to different religions. This book focuses mainly on the "Cave" of Islám, and the inhabitants of the Cave are Muslims.

The Companions of the Cave .... Companions of thy Apostle, the Seal of the Prophets.[28] The Báb

Companions of the Cave, part 1 (18:9–17)

The story of the Companions of the Cave or Inhabitants of the Cave—Sura 18 al-Kahf—begins with the 9th verse:

Have you considered that [the story of] the Companions of the Cave and Raqím is full of Our wonderful signs? Qur'án 18:9

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[*] This subject is discussed in chapter 22, "Perspicuous" and "allegorical" verses.

Explanation: The story of the Inhabitants of the Cave originated well before the appearance of Islám. The Qur'án has assigned a spiritual meaning to the story, and the above verse informs us that many signs and mysteries are hidden within it. In this chapter we strive to discover these signs and spiritual meanings.

> When the youths took shelter in the Cave they said: "O Our Lord! Have mercy on us and make our "Cause" right (guide us). Qur'án 18:10

Explanation: The "youths" is a reference to the believers who have an abundance of faith. These youths accepted Islám with heart and soul; and with enthusiasm and great love began to practice its commandments and laws. These faithful servants chose the command of God over their own desires, and asked God that their lives be in accordance with His "Cause" and Faith. The "Cause" in this verse is a reference to the command and religion of God. Just as a cave protects our bodies from floods, storms or attacks by wild animals; taking shelter in the Faith of God protects our souls from life's unpleasant events, and the influence and torment of the people of evil nature and behavior.

Bahá'u'lláh sometimes uses the word "Youth" when referring to Himself: *"Say: imagine ye that this Youth speaketh out of His Own desire?"*[29]

> We barred them from hearing [any news] for a certain number of years Qur'án 18:11

Explanation: The "certain number of years" is a reference to the one-thousand-year period of Islám. As discussed in chapter 7, the period of Revelation and inspiration in Islám ended in AH 260 with the death of Imám Ḥasan 'Askarí, the eleventh Imám. After that date, for a period of a thousand years, Muslims did not hear any new Message from God.

> Then We rouse them in order to see which of these two groups can estimate the period of their residence in the Cave. Qur'án 18:12

Explanation: "two groups" is a reference to loyal and disloyal Muslims. This verse shows the "youths" and another group of people were living in the Cave. Verse 15 clarifies this point. The important point in this verse is the duration in the Cave. We will also see the solution to this puzzle in other verses.

> This story We relate to you is the truth; they were youth; they believed in their Lord; the Lord increased their faith. Qur'án 18:13

Explanation: This verse further clarifies the meaning of the word "youths", and shows us that the youths are those who enjoy an abundance of faith and spiritual health. Such believers are always the recipient of God's grace and bounty.

Some people are physically strong, but their spirit suffers greatly from old age and sickness. Others are physically old but their spirit is in the utmost health and strength. The spirit of a faithful believer is always strong, young and supported by the favor and mercy of God.

> We made their hearts strong. They stood up and said: Our Lord is the creator of heavens and earth; we mention no other God beside Him; if we did, we have erred. Qur'án 18:14

Explanation: This verse is also in praise of "the youths", i.e. the virtuous and faithful Muslims who, with heart and soul, believe in the One True God; they are free from hypocrisy, dishonesty and deceit.

> But a group of people have chosen a god other than God; a god who has no power over their souls; then who does greater injustice than the one who accuses God of lying? Qur'án 18:15

Explanation: In verse 12 there was a mention of two groups; verses 13 and 14 introduce the first group; verse 15 speaks of the second group.

It is clear that deceitful and dishonest people can be found among every *ummah*; these are those who have God's name on their lips, but their hearts are contaminated by deceit and hypocrisy; these double-faced people have another god hidden in their heart and soul, and continually worship it; that god is their self and their desire to worship the world. These hypocrites think of themselves as the inhabitants of the Cave; but they are far from the Cave, i.e. faith in the One True God.

> Whenever you are free from the companionship of these people take refuge in the Cave; there, God will shower you with His grace and favor, and will make the Cause easy and tranquil for you. Qur'án 18:16

Explanation: The only way to escape hypocrites, deceitful and ignorant people of the world is to take shelter in the Cave, i.e. to remember God and place one's trust and reliance on his protection and support.

> And thou mightest have seen the sun when it arose, pass on the right of their cave, and when it set, leave them on the left, while they were in its spacious chamber. This is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom He misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a guardian or guide. Qur'án 18:17

The mysteries hidden in "You see the sun"

In the previous verse many mysteries are hidden. Once again, let us visit the words of Bahá'u'lláh in the Four Valleys regarding this verse:

> *If a man could know what lieth hid in this one verse, it would suffice him. Wherefore, in praise of such as these, He hath said: "Men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God ...."*[30]
>
> (quoting Qur'án 24:37)

The first question is this: What is intended by "sun" in the saying "You see the sun"?

The sun is an allegory that has been used to mean a variety of things. One of its meanings in many scriptures, including the above verse, is the Messenger of God Who shines in the heaven of God's Cause, Who will bestow the rays of knowledge to the people, and remove the veil of separation and darkness from the eyes of the seekers of the light of Truth.

In the following utterance, the Báb calls himself "the Sun of Truth":

The Sun of Truth is manifested, in this age, in the Name of the Báb.[31] The Báb

Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:78–79

In the following utterance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the Messengers of God as the "Sun of Reality"; and he teaches us that, in every age and dispensation, like One Sun, They have shone, and will shine, on the world under a new Name.

The spiritual cycles of the Sun of Reality are like the cycles of the material sun .... For example, once the Sun of Reality poured forth its rays from the sign of Abraham, and then it dawned from the sign of Moses and illuminated the horizon. Afterward it rose with the greatest power and brilliancy from the sign of Christ. Those who were the seekers of Reality worshiped that Reality wherever they saw it, but those who were attached to Abraham were deprived of its influences when it shone upon Sinai and illuminated the reality of Moses.[32] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In some of the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh has been likened to the rising of the sun (the Daystar):

Say: The Daystar of knowledge is manifest and the Luminary of insight hath appeared. Fortunate indeed is the one who hath attained, who hath witnessed, and who hath recognized.[33] Bahá'u'lláh

The Sun of eternity hath risen above the horizon of the world.[34] Bahá'u'lláh

Enable, then, Thy servants, O my God, to recognize the Day-Star that hath shone forth above the horizon of Thine irrevocable decree and purpose, ...[35] Bahá'u'lláh

O My servants! Deprive not yourselves of the radiance of this manifest Sun.[36] Bahá'u'lláh

In referring to Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb utters the following words:

He—glorified be His mention—resembleth the sun.[37] The Báb

The two Promised Onesof our age have used the "setting of the sun" to convey "the end of their earthly life":

Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the day-star of My beauty is set ....[38] Bahá'u'lláh

After the setting of this Sun ....[39] The Báb

The Báb's reference to Bahá'u'lláh:

From the rising of the Sun of Bahá' till its setting ....[40] The Báb

Two points have been used in verse 18:17 that show the similarity between the sun and the Messenger of God. First, just like the rising of the sun, the appearance of every Messenger is one of the signs of God's greatness (each is a sign of God). Secondly, more than at any other time, when the Messengers appear, the people are in need of God's guidance; because they have become severely trapped in blind imitations and vain imaginings.

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh uses the words **sun** and **guided** in a way very similar to verse 18:17:

> *The generality of the people, owing to their failure to grasp the meaning of these words, rejected and despised the person of the Manifestation, deprived themselves of the light of His divine guidance ....*[41] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following ḥadíth, the Apostle of God likens Himself to the sun and the Commander of the Faithful (Imám 'Alí) to the moon:

> I am like the sun and 'Alí is like the moon.[42]

The Báb who had both the station of a Messenger and of an Imám, has been likened to both the sun and the moon in the following verse:

> We have made Thee a resplendent sun and a radiant moon for all mankind.[43] The Báb

In the following ḥadíth, Imám 'Alí likens the Báb to a "sun" that rises from "its own west":

> Him behind Whom the Messiah stands in prayer is the sun that rises from its own west. *

"The rising of the sun from its own west" refers to the following: With the passing of Imám Ḥasan 'Askarí, "the sun of the Imamate" set; and after a thousand years, that sun rose from "its own west", meaning the same stock and same religion, in a new name (the Báb). "Behind whom the Messiah stands in prayer" refers to Bahá'u'lláh's acknowledgement and support for the Cause of the Báb; Bahá'u'lláh was a follower of the Báb and endeavored to defend the Báb and to propagate His Faith. The manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled the promise of the return of Christ.

According to Bahá'u'lláh's utterance in the Four Valleys, another meaning is hidden in the verse "You see the sun ...". Although not explicitly stated, it appears that the people who are worthy of the gift of faith can see the radiance of the sun with their inner eyes even though they may abide in a cave; such believers are so free and detached that the setting and the rising of the sun are similar to them; in any condition or any place they can clearly see the radiance of the Truth.

At the time of the appearance of the Messengers, the majority of people are unaware of the radiance of the Sun of Truth, and are immersed in the darkness of prejudices and vain imaginings. However, among them are those who are always awake and impatiently striving in their search for the Gem of Truth. At the time of the appearance of the Báb, those wakeful dwellers of the Cave were so vigilant that even without hearing the news of the appearance of the Promised One, they saw the radiance of God in that Youth and recognized Him; until, at last, a number of them sacrificed their lives, even as moths circling the flame of His Beauty. They were the first who, through their belief in the

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* Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 13, p195

promised Qá'im, gained a new life and were named "the Letters of the Living".* Quddús, Ṭáhirih, and Bábu'l-Báb were the most prominent among them.

The wakeful believers did not need a ḥadíth or a discussion to inform them; wherever they were they could see the Promised One of God, radiant and evident as the sun. Is the bright and shining sun in need of proof or reason for its existence and its radiance?

> Ask not for a proof of the sun and its radiance; for its light and rays are its proofs.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

Some other mysteries and allusions in verse 18:17 related to "And thou mightest have seen the sun ...":

- The rising of the sun from the right side (east) of the cave is a reference to appearance of the Báb from the east of the Cause of God.
- The gathering of the Companions of the Cave in its spacious chamber is a reference to believers in the Promised One taking refuge in the shadow of the one religion.
- The inhabitants of the cave are symbolically divided into those on the right (east) or on the left (west). Those on the left side where the sun sets, refers to those believers who, after the conclusion of the Báb's mission and the setting of that sun below the Horizon of the World, did not recognize the rising on the right of the radiant Sun from God's glorified and illumined horizon (Bahá'u'lláh).

  According to the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding this verse, , after the the Promised One of our time arises in the heaven of the Will of God, He separates the Companions of the Cave into those on "the right side" and those on "the left side".

  > The Sun of Reality separateth them into the right and the left side.[45] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

  Sura 56 al-Wáqi'ah is all about the "Great Event" of our time, i.e. the appearance of the two Promised Ones in the name of God. This rhythmical sura uses very beautiful and pleasing prose to allude to a great event; it describes the fate of "the companions of the right and the left", i.e. the believers (right) in the highest Paradise and the deniers (left) of the new Faith in the sorrowful Hell.

- What is the meaning of the words: "This is one of the signs of God"? (verse 18:17) In every age and dispensation the supremacy of the Messengers of God over others is like the supremacy of the radiance of the sun over the trembling flame of a candle. Nevertheless, unnumbered scholars and devout believers are incapable of seeing and recognizing that Sun. How astonishing that an observer be incapable of seeing and recognizing the radiant sun! Bahá'u'lláh has stated that God is "... *the most manifest of the*

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* This group of believers were 18 in number, the abjad value of the letters of Ḥayy ("Living") is 18.

manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!" This amazing truth also applies to the Manifestations of His Cause, i.e. the Messengers.

- A group of clergymen considered the verdict of torture and imprisonment for the Báb—an innocent and wronged Youth—as a pious act and, in the end, with complete confidence issued the order that He be murdered. Another group of clergymen accepted the pain of homelessness, poverty, torture and torment as sweeter than sugar and honey; and with perfect eagerness sacrificed their lives for His love. Who but God knows of this great mystery? Could we imagine anything more astonishing than this? Were we to gather all the world's miracles and compare them to this miracle, they would be as a drop compared to the sea.

> This is one of the signs of God. Qur'án 18:17

- Verse 18:17, which according to Bahá'u'lláh contains a great many mysteries, concludes with the following words:

> Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom He misleadeth thou shalt by no means find a guardian or guide.

These words, once again, remind us that our guidance is in God's hands. If we do not remove the blindfold from our heart's eyes, we will never see the new sun; because our kind and just Creator keeps the Beauty of His Face hidden from the worshippers of darkness, behind a thousand veils. The relationship between "the sun and light" with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith and "Bahá'u'lláh", meaning "the Light of God", is prophesied in some of the verses of Sura 24 an-Núr (Light). These verses will be discussed in the next chapter.

Companions of the Cave, part 2 (18:18–19)

> You imagine that they [the Companions of the Cave] are awake; but they are asleep. We turned them to their right side and to their left. Qur'án 18:18

Explanation: The inhabitants of the Cave, meaning the followers of former Faiths, appear to be awake at the time of the appearance of the new Messenger; but they are really asleep. God's Chosen Ones arise at a time when negligence and remoteness from God have dominated the souls, like a thick dark veil. These Messengers and Leaders in the path of Truth blow the trumpet blast of freedom that the sleeping and the heedless may hear with their inner ears and free themselves from the darkness of the Cave.

> *The Day of Resurrection hath come, yet the heedless are in bewildering sleep. The Hidden Mystery hath appeared, yet the deniers are busy with their vain imaginings. The Call of the Nightingale hath been raised but the people are, for the most part, heedless. The tongue of Grandeur is calling aloud, yet the geneality of the people wander distraught.*[46] Bahá'u'lláh

> Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake .... Revelation 16:15

> Be on guard! Be alert! ... Keep watch ... do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone. "Watch!" Mark 13:33–37

> ... Their dog, at the entrance of the Cave, has stretched his forelegs forward. If you had seen this [scene] you would have turned away and run in fear. Qur'án 18:18

In the story of the Companions of the Cave, a "dog" has such an important role that "the dog of the Companions of the Cave" has become an expression in Persian. The important question is this: What is the meaning of "the dog"?

Before solving this puzzle, it is appropriate to always keep in mind that our duty is to respect all God's people, even the most sinful ones. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that the seekers of the path of Truth never despise the low state of the sinful; because no one knows what his own end will be; how often a sinner, at the time of his death, attains the essence of faith; and how often, at the moment of his death, a believer has lost the precious gem of faith.[47]

According to God's command, no one has the right to insult another, but this command does not apply to God; He can say whatever He desires, and do whatever He wills; for God "*doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth*".

At the start of this discussion, it is appropriate to ask: What is the purpose of having a dog? One important reason is to give one a feeling of safety and as a protection from danger. A dog knows the enemy well, and, when necessary, hastens to the aid of its owner. Suppose instead of protecting the owner, a dog stands in front of the house and prevents his owner from leaving the house and others from entering it. What would the consequence be?

The dog of the Companions of the Cave standing in front of the Cave alludes, in the first place, to an authoritative figure who considers himself a leader and protector of the Muslims in the world.* Who held such a position at the time of the manifestation of the Báb? Probably the leading authority was the Sharif of Mecca, Sharíf Muḥammad, who as the chief of all Muslims whether Sunni or Shi'a, received a special letter from the Báb in 1845. In that letter, the Sharif and the inhabitants of Mecca were summoned to submit to the Will of God's Messenger, and accept the new Promised One of God. However, that powermonger, like most other potentates, ignored the summons of God.

It is befitting to peruse a part of the Summons to the Sharif of Mecca who was then nearly eighty years old. The Summons was written in Arabic while in Mecca to the chief of the Muslim world, by a twenty-five-year-old Iranian merchant who had not studied Arabic. Reflect for a moment and consider! Have you ever seen such a letter as that quoted below? Is the expression of such power and grandeur possible on the part of anyone without God's authority? Although this letter is addressed to the Sharif of Mecca and the inhabitants of that city, it is really addressed to all the world's Muslims. Any Muslim who reads this letter is responsible to God to undertake a search so that the truth of the claim of this young merchant becomes clear and evident to him.

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* "The dog of the Companions of the Cave" has various meanings. In this chapter, the intended meaning relates to the inhabitants and keepers of the "Cave" of Islám.

This verily is a Book revealed by the leave of your Lord, by the Exalted One, the Wise .... Say! Whosoever believeth in God and His signs shall be led to the straight Path, and whosoever wandereth is misled by his own self. God is informed of your doings. Whoso denieth the verses of this Book shall see none of his deeds accepted before God, verily, he will find himself in palpable error, and find no protector or helpe on the Day of Severing. Say: O inhabitants of Mecca! Believe in God and His signs, and follow the Commandments of the Book, if ye be of them that worship God. Verily, He hath created all things by His command, and all shall be gathered in His presence. Say: Were the people to assemble together to produce a book the like of this Book they would all utterly fail and be powerless to do so .... God is My witness and My Helper.

Say to those who deny the verses of God: Bring forth your evidences, if ye are truly of the Faith of God; and if ye be unable, and cannot do this, then believe ye in the testimony of your Lord and His signs.[48]

Verse 18:17 and the Báb's Summons to the Sharif of Mecca have several points in common:

This is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom He misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a guardian and guide..
Qur'án 18:17

Say! Whosoever believeth in God and His signs is truly guided; and whosoever disbelieveth is misled by his own self .... And whosoever denieth the verses of this Book ... shall find no protector or helperon the Day of Severing.[49]
Letter of the Báb

Let us return to verse 18:18. According to the above discussion, the "dog" in the blessed verse primarily refers to someone who stands in front of Muslims and considers himself "their" (i.e. the Muslims') protector; since it is said in the verse that "their dog was standing in front of the Cave". However, the word "dog" is, in general, a reference to religious leaders who consider themselves the protectors of the Faith. If these leaders were examples of righteousness and strove to propagate faith and love for the Creator, they would be worthy of praise, and in the sight of God, honored and admired.

However, according to historical evidence, a vast number of these self-styled guardians of religion have commandeered the position of the Shepherd—i.e. the Messenger of God—and consider the believers as their own sheep. Such ignorant leaders and usurpers of the gift of freedom and knowledge, having position and power, prevent the inhabitants of the Cave from leaving, and strangers and innovators from entering. They equate whoever endangers their position and power as being an interloper.

The history of religions demonstrates that the greatest cause of alarm to religious leaders is the news of the appearance of a new Messenger of God. This is because these Chosen Ones of God and the Standard-Bearers of freedom and knowledge to humanity awaken the sleeping masses with Their divine Call, and teach them that to come out of the Cave and witness the Sun of the grandeur and power of the Almighty is their God-given right. Hearing the sweet Voice of One of these Chosen Ones, those courageous inhabitants of the Cave who desire to awaken open their eyes. They become so awe-struck by the glory and beauty

of the Chosen One that, life-in-hand, they step out of the old Cave and hasten to His side, taking shelter in the new protecting and supporting Cave of the rejuvenated Faith of God.

> *Say: Blessed the slumberer who is awakened by My Breeze. Blessed the lifeless one who is quickened through My reviving breaths. Blessed the eye that is solaced by gazing at My beauty.*[50] Bahá'u'lláh

Seeing the immense influence and power demonstrated by the Chosen One, the guardians and usurpers of the Cave are so filled with hatred and anger that, were one to witness their convulsive rage, one would be terror-stricken. Anyone, who threatens the position and power of these despots, will suffer a painful fate. Observe how the Qur'án describes the condition of the cruel and immoral religious leaders in likening them to a menacing dog that has spread its forelegs forward, ready to attack.

> *See ye not how dogs have arrayed themselves against Me?*[51] Bahá'u'lláh

It is important to note that, in every age, the role adopted by the majority of religious leaders at the time of the appearance of the Messengers, has been to prevent the people from accepting these Chosen Ones of God. When Muḥammad the Apostle of God came forth, the main obstacles to people's acceptance of Islám were the religious leaders of that time who had the destiny of their followers in their grasp of power. As we shall see later, in Sura 18 the Cave the word "dog" has also been used to refer to one of the prominent leaders of Christianity. In the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh the role of the ignorant and self-promoting clergy in misleading people has been repeatedly raised, and the believers have been warned lest they relinquish their eternal destiny to such leaders:

> *O servants! ... accept ye not the words of every guide. How numerous the guides who have gone astray and failed to discover the straight Path! He alone is a guide who is free from the bondage of this world and whom nothing whatsoever can deter from speaking the truth.*[52] Bahá'u'lláh

We must note that, according to verse 18:12, the Companions of the Cave consist of two groups, which we can identify as: the righteous Muslims who worship none other than God, and the hypocritical Muslims whose God is their own self. Religious leaders are not all equal in righteousness; some are pious and beneficent; they are leaders in knowledge and sciences, in the love of God and service to the world; they are sincere and self-sacrificing; such leaders are esteemed in the sight of God; we must appreciate such champions of faith and conscience, as they are very dear to God. According to God's command, we must also hold such leaders dear and protect them as we love and protect our own eyes.

> *Those divines, however, who are truly adorned with the ornament of knowledge and of a goodly character are ... as eyes to the nations.*[53] Bahá'u'lláh

Religious leaders are more likely than other groups of people to ascend or descend because of their position and responsibilities. If they are pious and accept the Promised One of the Day then they will forever shine as stars and

ascend to heights of glory. Otherwise, they will wander perplexed and groaning, burning in the fire of separation from God and the happiness of the other world.

In verse 18, we saw that the dog of the Companions of the Cave was crouching in front of the Cave, with his paws stretched forward. Let us see what happens next:

> In such a state We awakened them [the Companions of the Cave] so they would engage in conversation with each other. One asked: "How long were you here [in the Cave]?" They answered: "One day or part of a day." [another group] said "Your Lord knows better how long you have been in the Cave." Qur'án 18:19

The period of being in the Cave refers to the duration of Islám. As we have seen in chapter 7, the period of Islám has been prophesied as **a-day-of-a-thousand-years**. Verse 19 also refers to that "one Day". However, in this verse there is also a mention of "a part of a day". What is the reason for this? As was explained before, according to a ḥadíth that is very similar to the verses of the Qur'án, the Apostle of God has said that "if My ummah be righteous they shall have one Day, if not, they will have half a Day". The words "one Day" or "half a Day" in this ḥadíth are completely in agreement with the Word of God in this story, i.e. "one Day or part of a Day". As prophesied in the previous verse, "Your Lord knows better how long you have been in the Cave". Meaning only God knows of this mystery: Is the duration of Islám "one Day or part of a Day"?

Sura 20 Ṭá-Há' repeats this discussion. The topics of suras 18 and 20 are very similar. In both:

- A group of people are engaged in a discussion.
- Their discussion is related to the period of their stay in a place.
- The people engaged in the discussion are not aware of the length of the stay; only God and some awakened people are aware of this mystery.

> The Day when there is a blast in the Trumpet; and We shall gather the sinful who have dark and heavy eyes. Qur'án 20:102

> They whisper among themselves, saying "You stayed no more than ten [units of time]." Qur'án 20:103

Explanation: Verse 103 does not specify what unit of time the number "ten" measures; it may be a century or some other time period. If we consider the unit is a century, then the result is equal to "the period of return" in Islám, which is a-day-of-a-thousand years.*

> We [God] know best what they will say. When the best and fairest among them shall say: You stayed no more than a day. Qur'án 20:104

Explanation: In this verse the period of time is given precisely; no longer is there a discussion of a time unit; the period is specified as "no more than one day". Since according to the verses of the Qur'án "God's Day" is equal to a

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* As we saw in chapter 7, "the period of administration" in Islám ended with the passing of Imám Ḥasan 'Askarí (AH 260); after that "the period of return" began. That period ended with the manifestation of the Bab in AH 1260 (AD 1844).

thousand years, this verse also provides us with the year of the manifestation of the Báb. We must remember that we are dealing with a puzzle, and to understand each verse we must consider all the related verses.

Companions of the Cave, part 3 (18:19)

> Send one from among you [the awakened] with money to find out what is the purest food, so he can bring you a portion of it; try to go [on this journey] with care, so that no one becomes aware of your action. Qur'án 18:19 (cont.)

Explanation: At the beginning of the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith, many believers would journey to the "Promised City" which was hundreds of miles away from their homeland, so that they may partake of the purest spiritual food that had come down from the heaven of God's bounty. This food, the heavenly Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, was what those self-sacrificing believers were bringing back as gifts, with great difficulty and in secret, to their fellow believers.

In reference to the heavenly food, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *This imperishable food is the cause of eternal life. This food refers, in the first place and the highest station, to the remembrance revealed by the Pen of the Most High,* in the honor of the believers, men and women alike.*[54]

> *This is the bread of which it is said: "Lord, send down upon us Thy bread from heaven.*[55]

> *Praise be God, Who hath revealed His bounty which is the food descended from the heaven of grace ... Whoso attaineth it will not hunger nor shall he be touched by anguish.*[56] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In these cities spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God's imperishable blessing.*[57]

> Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matt 4:4

'Akká, a small and remote port city, was part of the Ottoman Empire between CE 1517 and 1918. Bahá'u'lláh was exiled from Iran to Iraq in 1853. In 1863 he was exiled to Turkey. In 1868 He was sent to 'Akká, where He arrived on 31 August 1868. Today, 'Akká is in the state of Israel.

> *Great is thy blessedness, O 'Akká, in that God hath made thee the dayspring of His Most Sweet Voice, and the dawn of His most mighty signs.*[58] Bahá'u'lláh

> *It ('Akká) is the ugliest and the most ruinous of the cities in the world.*[59] Bahá'u'lláh

In the end, this ugly and ruinous city became the Point of Adoration for the world. God made it the fountainhead of His bounties, the "phoenix risen from the ashes".

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* A reference to Bahá'u'lláh.

This remote and obscure city is mentioned many times in Islamic hadiths, and has been the object of attention and praise. For example, Bahá'u'lláh relates the following ḥadíth in one of His Tablets:

> *Blessed the man that hath visited 'Akká, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of 'Akká.*[60]

Ibn-i-'Arabí describes 'Akká as the Banquet-Hall of God:

> ... the plain of 'Akká, the Banquet-Hall of God.[61]

> *Blessed the insatiate soul who casteth away his selfish desires for love of Me and taketh his place at the banquet table which I have sent down from the heaven of divine bounty for My chosen ones.*[62] Bahá'u'lláh

According to verse Sura18:19:

> Try to go [on this journey] with care that no one becomes aware of you [your actions].

While Bahá'u'lláh lived in 'Akká, the believers traveled for months, under unbearable conditions, to attain the presence of the object of their desire, the Promised One. If the enemies of the Faith became aware of the travel plans of these self-sacrificing believers—who for the sake of receiving the heavenly food were traveling to visit their Promised One—the lives of these pilgrims became endangered. The risk was so high that sometimes the pilgrims had to hide the purpose of their journey from family members and friends. Some of these travelers, fearing recognition by the enemies, would hide the heavenly Tablets and Writings in the folds of their clothes, and even on occasions, to protect their lives, would swallow these Tablets. Similar events also occurred during the 6-year ministry of the Báb.

The story of the conversion of a Muslim seeker in Isfahan is an example of the dreadful conditions of that time. A seeker became acquainted with a Bahá'í; in the beginning of their friendship, he was fearful, and only after the passing of some time, confessed his belief. After the two learnt to trust one another, they had to look for a place to meet for discussions. It is best to hear the summary of this story from the mouth of the Muslim seeker:

> After becoming acquainted with one another, we were seized by a great fear—some nights, I would go to the home of the Bahá'í friend; I would first hide in the vestibule of the home until all residents of the neighborhood were gone to bed; then, we would meet there or in the kitchen or another covered area, and, with great joy and excitement, have our discussion. Sometimes we needed light to study the divine verse; we would place a lamp in the furnace and using its light would read the Writings. It was the same when we met at my residence, and even more challenging; on rare occasions, three or four Bahá'ís would gather together; I would go to their meeting in the middle of the night and return early dawn the next day. My residence was on an upper floor with a window into the garden. I would drop a rope from that window and go down to leave; on my return, I would use the same rope to go up to my place, and would get up in the morning so that the other occupants of the house would not know that I had been absent.[63]

Verily I say, such is the greatness of this Cause that the father flieth from his son, and the son flieth from his father.[64] Bahá'u'lláh

Thus were the lives of the early believers in this Faith.

Companions of the Cave, part 4 (18:20)

If they find you, they will stone you, or forcefully return you to their religion; in that case, you will not attain your goal. Qur'án 18:20

Explanation: In the early days of the appearance of the new Faith, many self-sacrificing believers were tortured and murdered by the order of the religious leaders and rulers of the time. Stoning was one of the ways that these champions of the land of faith were put to death. These believers had two choices to protect their lives; they either had to hide their belief so they would not be identified, or once they were identified they had to give up their belief in the Promised One of the age and once again call themselves Muslims.

How many a land whose soil hath been tinged with their blood, and how many cities in which their sighs, cries andlamentations were raised.[65] Bahá'u'lláh

The following ḥadíth, which is quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, informs us of the plight of the believers in the new Faith:

His chosen ones shall be abased in His day. Their heads shall be offered as presents .... They shall be slain and burnt. Fear shall seize them; dismay and alarm shall strike terror into their hearts. The earth shall be dyed with their blood. Their womenfolk shall bewail and lament. These indeed are my friends![66]

An Austrian officer who had a commission in Iran on behalf of his country, was horrified by the savage actions of the people towards the self-sacrificing followers of the Faith; he felt compelled to write, in a letter published in the Austrian newspaper *Oesterreichischer Soldatenfruend* ("Austrian Soldier Friend"):

"Follow me, my friend, you who lay claim to a heart and European ethics, follow me to the unhappy ones who, with gouged-out eyes, must eat, on the scene of the deed, without any sauce, their own amputated ears; or whose teeth are torn out with inhuman violence by the hand of the executioner; or whose bare skulls are simply crushed by blows from a hammer; or where the bazaar is illuminated with unhappy victims, because on right and left the people dig deep holes in their breasts and shoulders, and insert burning wicks in the wounds. I saw some dragged in chains through the bazaar, preceded by a military band, in whom these wicks had burned so deep that now the fat flickered convulsively in the wound like a newly extinguished lamp. Not seldom it happens that the unwearying ingenuity of the Oriental leads to fresh tortures. They will skin the soles of the Bábí's feet, soak the wounds in boiling oil, shoe the foot like the hoof of a horse, and compel the victim to run. No cry escaped from the victim's breast; the torment is endured in dark silence by the numbed sensation of the fanatic; now he must run; the body cannot endure what the soul has endured; he falls. Give him the coup de grâce! Put him out of his pain! No! The executioner swings the whip, and—I myself have had to witness it—the unhappy victim of hundredfold tortures runs! This is the beginning of the end. As for the end itself, they hang the scorched and perforated bodies by their hands and feet to a tree

head downwards, and now every Persian may try his marksmanship to his heart's content from a fixed but not too proximate distance on the noble quarry placed at his disposal. I saw corpses torn by nearly one hundred and fifty bullets." "When I read over again, what I have written, I am overcome by the thought that those who are with you in our dearly beloved Austria may doubt the full truth of the picture, and accuse me of exaggeration. Would to God that I had not lived to see it! But by the duties of my profession I was unhappily often, only too often, a witness of these abominations. At present I never leave my house, in order not to meet with fresh scenes of horror .... Since my whole soul revolts against such infamy ... I will no longer maintain my connection with the scene of such crimes."[67]

... they plucked out his eyes and cut off his nose, and inflicted on him such indignities that strangers wept and lamented, and secretly raised funds to support his wife and children.[68] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by God! Wert thou to see Me with Mine Eyes, thou wouldst find every member of My body in the maw of the serpent. Alas, Alas! For all that hath been concealed, which I deem improper to disclose.[69] Bahá'u'lláh

Not for a single night in Mine earthly life did I find rest, and not during a single day was I granted repose .... Every morn, as I arose from My bed, a fresh affliction awaited Me, and every eve, as I repaired to the solitude of My chamber, a sore trial was in store .... Not for one instant did I seek to preserve Mine own life.[70]Bahá'u'lláh

Sura 83 al-Muṭaffifín ("the Dealers in Fraud") refers to future events. The following is a description of the actions of the deniers of the Promised One in this world, and the fate of the two groups (believers and deniers) in the eternal world:

These sinners were some of those who ridiculed the believers [in the Promised One] .... Whenever they passed by them, they winked in mockery ... and say "these are a misled group" .... But this day, it is the believers who are laughing at the deniers. The believers find themselves seated on their throne (in heaven). Have the unbelievers seen the punishment for their actions? [Could they escape the consequence of their actions?] Qur'án 83:29–36

The eyes of His loved ones have always wept sore, while His enemies rejoiced and made merry in their heedlessness. However, that weeping was followeth by a myriad blessings, and this jubilation by a grievous retribution. Erelong, the fruits of these two states shall appear from the tree of His irrevocable Decree. How proud the eye that is worthy of shedding such tears, and how great the felicity of the neck fit to be snared in the noose of the Friend.[71] Bahá'u'lláh

Indeed, whatever doth occur during the days of the Manifestation of God, though to outward seeming it be grievous abasement, in truth it concealeth within it incalculable glory and honour.[72] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh spent four months in the Síyáh-Chál ("the Black Pit") in Teheran, a prison so deadly that few would leave it with their lives. He tells us that in those conditions He was the richest man on earth.[73]

The followers of this Faith were, from the start, objects of ridicule and contempt by many people, and were referred to as "the misled, misguided sect". In a prayer Bahá'u'lláh refers to the ridicule by the deniers:

Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! Thou seest my poverty and my misery, my troubles and my needs, my utter helplessness and my extreme lowliness, my lamentations and my bitter wailing, the anguish of my soul and the afflictions which beset me. The power of Thy might beareth me witness! Such is the depth of mine abasement that Thy servants who have strayed far from Thy path deride me. Thou knowest that I am recognized as the bearer of Thy name among Thy creatures. Thou knowest that my station is but an image of Thy station, that my virtues recount Thy virtues, that within mine inmost being naught can be found except the revelations of Thy signs, and that my very essence is but a reflection of the evidences of Thy unity.

All these things Thou hast noised abroad among Thy creatures, in such wise that none can recognize me, except as one who beareth Thy name. I swear by Thy glory! My lamentations are not for the things which have befallen me in Thy path, but are due to my recognition that by reason of mine abasement the hearts of them that love Thee have been sore shaken, and the souls of Thine adversaries have been so filled with joy that they rejoice over those who have detached themselves from all except Thee and have hastened towards the river of Thy remembrance and praise. So great is their waywardness that when meeting Thy loved ones, they shake their heads in derision of Thy Cause and say: "Where is your Lord Whom ye mention in the daytime and in the night season? Where is He to be found Whom ye call your Sovereign, to Whom ye summon all men to turn?" Their pride and haughtiness waxed greater and greater until they denied the power of Thy might and rejected Thy sovereignty and dominion.[74] Bahá'u'lláh

Ridiculing the Messengers of God is not new. How did people see the Apostle of God at the beginning of His mission?

Whenever they see Thee, they mock Thee. Is this the one God hath chosen as a Messenger? Qur'án 25:41

What sin had the believers committed except to believe in the Faith of God?

Do you take revenge on us only because we believe in the verses of God? Qur'án 7:126

Companions of the Cave, part 5 (18:21)

Thus do We relate their story so that the people know that God's promise is true, and there is no doubt about the "Hour". Qur'án 18:21

Explanation: As previously discussed, the "promise" and the "Hour" are very important words related to the puzzle of the Qur'án; both have been repeatedly used in reference to the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. It is evident from the above verse that the story of the Companions of the Cave is related to an "event" or "promise" that must be fulfilled in the future. What could this event be except the coming of the Promised One and the fulfillment of God's promise after the conclusion of the Day of a thousand years?

The people dispute with each other regarding the Cause [*Amr*] of them [Companions of the Cave]. Some say: "Let us construct a structure upon them; God knows them better [Judgement is with God]. Those who prevailed regarding their Cause [*Amr*] said: "It is befitting to construct a temple for them."

Qur'án 18:21 (cont.)

Explanation: The above verse describes the current situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran. From the start of the Bahá'í Faith there has been and continues to be differences of opinion among Muslims as to how to treat Bahá'ís. Some are in opposition, some are impartial, and others are supportive. Those who oppose the Faith say: "The Bahá'ís are the enemy of Islám. Eradicate that misguided, misled sect!" In previous verses detailed references were made to this group. We saw how the believers in the new Faith had to conceal the reason for their journey to the city of 'Akká, and if they were recognized they were subjected to cruelty and torture by this group of Muslims.

Verse 21 refers to two other groups: Those who are impartial and say, "Construct a building upon them", meaning consider them a distinct group so that they live freely in their own social and belief space. Another group goes further than this; they say: "It is befitting to build a temple for them." This group believes that the Bahá'ís are a progressive and enlightened people; we must co-operate with them to achieve progress, prosperity and freedom in Iran, even building them a temple. This way of thinking is in complete harmony with the treatment of religious minorities by Muḥammad at the beginning of Islám. In the book *The Spirit of Islam*, Syed Ameer Ali has written that the Prophet commanded the Muslims to endeavor to protect the Christians and their churches, to grant them freedom to live by their own beliefs and customs, and not to force them to convert to Islám. If a Muslim had a Christian spouse, he should not impose his religion on her. The great Prophet also commanded that if Christians needed financial aid to repair their churches or for any other reason, Muslims must hasten to assist them.[75] This is the true tradition and custom of Islám that reflected the high-mindedness and mercy of that great Prophet regarding the treatment of religious minorities.

According to the Qur'án, the view of the group that says: "It is befitting to construct a temple for them.", in the end prevails over the view of others; after a long conversation, their opinions regarding the Cause of God, i.e. the religions of the people who have awakened by the radiance of the sun and have come out of the Cave, is accepted by the majority of the people.

The view that from the start the Bahá'ís were at the forefront of activities for the advancement and freedom in Iran, is confirmed in the book *Rag-i-Ták*, written by "Dilárám Mashhúrí". Note the following sample from this book regarding the role of the Bahá'ís in the advancement of Iran particularly during the reign of the Qájár dynasty:

> The Bahá'ís indeed constituted the progressive element in the Iranian society .... They were, in the first place, insisting on their own civil rights, and must be regarded as the most courageous champions of the path of freedom and progress. The fact that they stepped into this arena without any weapons is a testimony to the truth that in that dark period they were the guardian of the light that radiated in the dawn of civilization in Iran, and, to this day, it has not been extinguished. In addition, by resorting to pacifism and peacefulness, in recent times also they have been the vanguard of the culture of "social struggle" in the East and the West.[76]

The fulfillment of the prophecy of the Qur'án relates to the fact that eventually the followers of other religions hasten to support the Bahá'ís and their religion has been confirmed in the heavenly Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith. It is the way of the people that until they are faced with difficulties and drink the cup of calamity, they will not open their inner eyes, will not relinquish blind imitation, and will not abandon vain imaginings and prejudices. After many wars and killings, and after sustaining unpleasant fates, in the end, the people of the world will appreciate the new Faith of God that has risen from Iran. Then will friendship and co-operation, not only among Muslims and Bahá'ís, but among the followers of all religions become the way of all people.

Companions of the Cave, part 6 (18:22–24)

> Some say: They were three [persons]; the fourth amongst them was a dog. Another group says: They were five; the sixth one was a dog; these people guess what they do not know. There is yet another group who says: They were seven; the eighth one was a dog. Say, my Lord knows their number; only a small group of people know. Qur'án 18:22

Explanation: In this blessed verse, several numbers are mentioned; these numbers relate to the imagination of the Companions of the Cave who express their views without knowledge of the mystery of the Qur'án and without benefiting from the light of the new Messenger of God. In the end, a total of eight is reached with an added comment that few people know the number or understand what it means.

This number relates to the events of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. That Promised One proclaimed the "Great Announcement" to eight of the political and religious chiefs of the time. Seven of them were political leaders and one was a religious leader. Bahá'u'lláh sent a special letter to each of these kings and centers of power and fame:

a) Seven political leaders

Czar Alexander II (Emperor of Russia)
Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria
Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany
Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz
Napoleon III
Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh
Queen Victoria

b) One religious leader

Pope Pius IX

In the above verse, in all instances one person has been given the label "dog" and separated from the rest. What is the reason for this? The reason for setting apart this one person from the others is his leadership role: Pope Pius IX was the only religious leader who was formally addressed with a special letter or Tablet by Bahá'u'lláh. As we saw in verse 18:18, the label of "dog" is also used for an important Muslim leader, the Sharif of Mecca. Each of those two leaders lived at the center of his religion, i.e. the Vatican and Mecca respectively.

In the divine scriptures, animals have been used to indicate various meanings and purposes. We must remember that animals are not inherently evil; they exist according to God's plan and all their characteristics relate to their special needs and survival as God has decreed. As a sign of God's mercy and grace towards animals it should be sufficient to say that three suras in the Qur'án are named after them (Sura 16, The Bee, Sura 29 the Spider, and Sura 2 the Heifer); another sura is named after a group of them (Sura 6 the Cattle). In the Bible the title "the Lamb of God" symbolically refers to the sacrifice of Jesus.*

All God's creation is dear to Him, and each is created for a reason. However, man has a different nature and station:

> *How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached!*[77] Bahá'u'lláh

> Man reaches where he sees none but God. Behold how high is the station of man. Sa'dí

However, if man does not appreciate his own worth, and is inclined to wickedness and injustice, he becomes a savage animal—like a biting snake or a blood-thirsty wolf.† The Báb tells us that such a human is not even worthy of the name of an animal.[78]

Some people do not harm others yet live and die in ignorance. Just as in Persian, a donkey is the symbol of ignorance and thoughtlessness, in the Qur'án, it has also been used to confirm the same characteristic:

> They [the deniers of truth] are like donkeys fleeing from a lion. Qur'án 74:50–51

> Those who carry the Tora but cannot bear its meaning are even as donkeys carrying books. How evil is the fate of people who consider God's verses false. Qur'án 62:5

Animals play important roles in the works of great Persian poets :

> The poor donkey though void of discernment,
> It nevertheless esteemed when he carries a burden;
> Oxen and asses who carry loads
> Are superior to men oppressing mankind.
>
> Sa'dí [classics,mit,edu/Sadi/gulistan.mb,txt]

Sometimes an attribute is so prominent and praiseworthy in an animal that humans with superior qualities are likened to that animal. For example, lions are famous for the quality of power, grandeur and bravery; that is why the title

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* The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" John 1:29–31

† Bahá'u'lláh labeled three cruel and treacherous religious leaders of the Qájár era as the "Wolf" (Shaykh Muḥammad Báqir, 1819–1883), the "Son of the Wolf" (Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqíy-i-Najafí, 1846–1914) and the "She-Serpent" (Mír Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Khátúnábádí, d. 1881).

lion has been given to Imám 'Alí, The Messenger of our time has been referred to as the "lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5) and his voice likened to the "roar of a lion". Rúmí goes even further than this and gives the title 'lion' to God. Human beings have also been compared to other animals because of their superior qualities:

Butterfly: love

Camel: forbearance, patience

Lamb: self-sacrifice

Nightingale: love

Pigeon: peacefulness

Sheep: obedience

> O bird of the dawn learn from the butterfly the secret of love
> For that burnt one gave its life but made no sound. Sa'dí*

However, in most cases there is a negative connotation when a human has been compared to an animal. We can find the following examples in the divine scriptures:

Bat: hater of the light of truth

Carcass: corrupt and foolish follower

Dog: enemy or guardian of religion

Fly: abject and unworthy human

Goat: disobedient follower

Owl: one who is weary of the light of truth

Pig: one who is not worthy of receiving God's message and the gift of faith

Snake: enemy of God's religion

Vulture: greedy and parasite-like

Wolf: vicious and greedy religious leader

Jesus called himself a shepherd and his followers "sheep":

> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
> John 10:11

It is clear that sheep are in constant danger from attacks by rapacious wolves. To protect them, the kind shepherd places one or more dogs in the flock; the outstanding attribute of dogs are obedience and loyalty to the shepherd. If the dog strives to protect the sheep, he is worthy of praise; but if he forsakes loyalty and ignores the command of the shepherd, or considers the flock his own, what will happen? Clearly such an animal, without the guidance and obedience to the command of the shepherd, is incapable of protecting the sheep; and if he feels hungry, he may acquire the habits of wolves, and devour the sheep and even the shepherd.

In the following utterance, Jesus likens pretentious leaders to 'snakes' or a 'brood of vipers':

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* Abú-Muḥammad Muṣliḥ ad-Dín bin 'Abdu'lláh Shírází, better known by his pen name Sa'dí, also known as Sa'dí Shírází (c. 1210–1291 or 1292), was a major Persian poet and prose writer of the medieval period.

> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!
>
> You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?
> Matthew 23:29–33

The enemies of the Apostle of God and Imám 'Alí were, in the first place, the religious leaders of their time; Imám Ḥusayn, that wronged and kind master, was beheaded with the sanction of Muslim leaders.

The term "dog" has been used repeatedly in heavenly scriptures to refer to cruel and faithless leaders as well as other people of evil nature contaminated with the dross of the world.

> Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.
> Revelation 22:15

> *Say: By God! Verily, the Most Great Sea can never be polluted by the touch of dog, while the Beauty of the sun can never be veiled by this cloud that hath come between them* [the people] *and the Lord of lords.*[79] Bahá'u'lláh

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh likens ignorant and cruel leaders to dogs and likens their ignorant followers to carcasses:

> *... yet these people, ravenous as the dogs, have gathered around carrion ....*[80]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Jesus was crucified at the demand, and with the support, of religious leaders of His time. Christians believe the following verse prophecies the crucifixion of Christ:

> Dogs have surrounded me, a band of evil men has encircled me,
> They have pierced my hands and my feet. Psalms 22:16

As seen above, the term 'dog' is also used at the beginning of the story of the Companions of the Cave; we read that "their dog" (a dog that considers himself the guardian of Muslims) has spread his legs causing fear in people; it is clear that the main aim of this "dog" is to prevent the inhabitants of the Cave from exiting and strangers from entering the Cave. Let us look again at the verse:

> ... Their [the Muslim ummah's] dog has stretched his forelegs forward; if you had seen this [scene] you would have turned away and run in fear. Qur'án 18:18

As was mentioned above, history has witnessed that after the appearance of the Messengers of God, a number of ambitious religious leaders install themselves as the shepherds and consider God's "sheep" as their own. Such a tyrannical assumption of power has, during the course of history, created great difficulties for humanity. All religions have been the subject of abuse by such ignorant and faithless leaders. However, the growth and maturity of humanity will gradually eradicate such abuses; because in the Bahá'í Faith, the tradition of

having religious leaders is completely abolished. The leaders and directors of the Faith are elected by the believers in a "democratic" manner and for a specific period of time; and if they violate the standards of faith and conscience, they immediately lose their position and office.

We saw the following beautiful poem by Ṭáhirih in chapter 1:

> Look up! Our dawning day draws its first breath!
> The world grows light! Our souls begin to glow
>
> No ranting shaykh rules from his pulpit
> No mosque hawks holiness it does not know
>
> No sham, no pious fraud, no priest commands!
> The turban's knot cut to its root below!
>
> No more conjurations! No spells! No ghosts!
> Good riddance! We are done with folly's show!
>
> The search for Truth shall drive out ignorance
> Equality shall strike the despots low
>
> Let warring ways be banished from the world
> Let justice everywhere its carpet throw
>
> May Friendship ancient hatreds reconcile
> May love grow from the seed of love we sow![81]

The story of the Companions of the Cave refers to two dogs; one dog who considers himself the guardian of Islám, and another who considers himself the guardian of Christianity. In the Qur'án there is reference to a third person who has also been likened to a dog. It is befitting to know the identity of that "dog" and to see if there is a connection between his story and the story of the two dogs of the Companions of the Cave. Verses 7:173–174 speak of those who, because of the vain imitations of their ancestors, do not recognize the Messenger of the time; then it speaks of a person who, like a dog, no matter how he is treated, continues to display his nature:

> Relate to them the story of one to whom We sent Our [God's] signs and proofs, but he ignored them; Satan followed him and he was misled .... He is even as a dog who if you attack him, he will loll his tongue; if you leave him alone, he will still loll his tongue. Qur'án 7:175–176

Explanation: Like the two dogs of the Companions of the Cave, the dog in verse 7:176 is, in general, a representative of all who deny God's signs and proofs. However, it is very likely that this is a reference to the story of a particular person who has a high station and position. The importance of his station is indicated by the fact that, in the first place, God sends him His signs and proofs; secondly, Satan who is himself the ruler of the land of perversion, deceit and hypocrisy, is his follower and in the shadow of his support.

Who might possess such characteristics? Two people come to mind regarding whom the purport of the Qur'anic verse is completely fulfilled. The first is Mírzá Yaḥyá, (1831–1912) known as Azal, who was given an important

position by the Báb; the purpose of his selection was that, in the absence of the divine Shepherd, i.e. until the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, he should be the token leader of the Báb's followers and to strive to protect them. However, he disregarded the true Shepherd and claimed the role of herdsman for himself. Instead of obedience to Bahá'u'lláh, that great Promised One of God, Mírzá Yaḥyá arose with the utmost effort in opposition and enmity toward Him, and with a heart full of envy and hatred,

In the Kitáb-i-Badí', Bahá'u'lláh confirms the connection of the previous verse with Mírzá Yaḥyá:*

> *Thou art the one who haht been mentioned in these terms in the fromer Book, exalted be His words: Even as a dog who lolleth out his tongue, whether you attack him or ignore him.*[82] Bahá'u'lláh

Mírzá Yaḥyá was unrivaled in his inclination to evil; all meanness was gathered within him; he did not shy away from committing any malice, cruelty or abomination, being the embodiment of all human shortcomings. Nevertheless, the ocean of God's mercy is so overflowing that Bahá'u'lláh utters the following about him:

> *Though he is burdened by sins greater than the weight of the heavens and the earth, even so – inasmuch as the oceans of grace billow in this Day -- should he repent and return, God will, through His mercy that surpasseth the whole of creation, forgive him.*[83] Bahá'u'lláh

In the Kitáb-i-Badí', Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly refers to the role of Siyyid Muḥammad who was the instigator and patron of Mírzá Yaḥyá:

> *This is not from thee, but what the Satan whispered in your heart.*[84] Bahá'u'lláh

> [Siyyid Muḥammad] *suggested to him* [Mírzá Yaḥyá] *all that he could, and all these affairs are of his devising.*[85] Bahá'u'lláh

Let us, once again, review the signs that Sura 7 A'ráf has given us regarding the usurper of the position of the shepherd. The Qur'án states: Tell them the story of the one:

- To whom God sends His signs and proofs.
- Satan is his follower.
- In the end, he is gone astray.

All these three signs were fulfilled in Mírzá Yaḥyá's life:

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* According to *Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq*, Mírzá Mihdí Gílání, the judge and leader of the Shí'ih sect in Istanbul, became acquainted with Siyyid Muḥammad and was deceived by him. As a result Mírzá Mihdí Gílání wrote a letter full of slander and protest to a Bahá'í. When that letter was presented to Bahá'u'lláh, He wrote a 300 page answer, during the course of three days (2 hours each day), to counter Mírzá Mihdí Gílání's protests and slander—this answer is called the Kitáb-i-Badí'. In the course of His 39-year mission Bahá'u'lláh revealed the equivalent of 100 volumes of Writings.

- An invitation was dispatched to him from Bahá'u'lláh
- He had a deceitful instigator and follower named Siyyid Muḥammad Iṣfahání to whom Bahá'u'lláh referred as "Satan"[86]
- Eventually God's justice was applied to him and he forfeited the position given him by the grace of God.

In the first one hundred years of the Bahá'í Faith one other person also appeared to fulfil all these signs. That person was Muḥammad Sháh Qájár to whom the Báb sent several letters explaining the signs and proofs of the religion of God, and asked him to provide an opportunity so that He (the Báb) could prove to him the truth of His words. Muḥammad Sháh ignored those letters and invitations; instead of search and investigation, he sent the Báb to the prisons of Máh-Kú and Chihríq, in the state of Ádhirbayján. Muḥammad Sháh's persecutions went even further in the final days of his life when he was persuaded by his prime minister, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí, to issue an order for the murder of Bahá'u'lláh. However, Muḥammad Sháh's death deprived him of the opportunity to carry out that order.[87]

According to Qur'anic prophecy, "Satan" is under the influence of the person to whom God sends His signs and proofs. Those who have read the Qájár history know that this "Satan" is Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. What is the work of Satan? To seduce simple-hearted and ignorant people. Muḥammad Sháh, even though he was outwardly the king and ruler over his prime minister, had no opinion of his own and continually lived under the influence of the temptation and persuasion of that Satan in human form.*

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* The prominent people of the Qájár era were greatly puzzled and saddened that Muḥammad Sháh had been deceived by Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí. Mírzá Buzurg Núrí, the father of Bahá'u'lláh, was one of the ministers at the time of Muḥammad Sháh, and a great calligrapher who received the title of "Mír Imád-i-Thání". In a letter to one of the prominent people of the time, Mírzá Buzurg referring to the unjust and foolish influence of Mírzá Áqásí on the sovereign wrote: "O Lord, may you keep this 'monkey' away from the king" (the word used, "nasnás" refers to a kind of legendary human-like monkey with a frightening form; an alternate meaning for the word is deceitful and evil). It is hard to imagine a better word to describe this hideous and deceitful man. To ingratiate himself, the tale-bearing recipient of the letter sent it to the prime minister. In a gathering, in the presence of the financial administrator, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí showed the letter to Bahá'u'lláh and asked Him: "What have I done to your father that he writes this about me?" Bahá'u'lláh kept silent. An administrator, who was a friend of Mírzá Buzurg, attempted to protect his friend's life by disputing the matter, saying: "This is not the hand-writing of Mírzá Buzurg." But Áqásí responded that such words were possible only from Mírzá Buzurg, meaning that such a concise and beautifully written sentence, and its skillfully expressed purpose, could only have come from an ingenious person such as Mírzá Buzurg. It appears miraculous that the two Promised Ones of our time and the reflective and skilled calligrapher Mírzá Buzurg managed to escape the claws of that vicious and deceitful man, Mírzá Áqásí.

In a bold and moving Epistle (literally the "Sermon of Wrath") written to Mírzá Áqásí, the Báb Named him the "manifestation of Satan". The following is a provisional translation of a brief portion of that Letter:

> O thou who hast disbelieved in God and His signs, turned away from His Self and carried thyself proudly before His Gate! Verily, nothing escapeth the knowledge of God, glorified be His mention .... By Him Who holdest my Self in His Hand! Your negligence of my Remembrance and your disobedience of My command, and your turning away from My countenance, are more grievous for thee than the Hell fire .... Shouldst thou be made aware of what thy hands have wrought in My Cause thou wouldst flee to mountaintops and sit upon the dust stripped of thy garments, and cry out from the judgement of creation .... What thou hast done, O manifestation of the Satan! Even as thou hast oppressed all of creation, visible and invisible.
>
> Dost thou presume that thou hast the pleasures of this world, and art established upon the seat of government, boasting among those around thee that God hath placed the reigns of command in thy hands? Nay, by My Lord! Thou dost not sit save at the head of Hellfire, enjoy naught but the fire of loss, partake only the fruits of the tree of Hellfire, and drink not except the bitter water.[88]

What are the similarities shared by a dog who sticks his tongue out no matter what and those two followers of "Satan", i.e. Mírzá Yaḥyá and Muḥammad Sháh? If a servant places his neck in the collar of ignorance, imitation and vain imaginings, his deliverance will be extremely difficult, even impossible, to whatever manner of rescue we resort. Whatever we say and in whatever way, it will make no difference. Such a animal-like human is so deeply drowned in the ocean of imagination and suspicion, and is so trapped in the fetters of idle fancy that he disregards all standards of truth, reason and wisdom. At all times he utters his own idle imaginings and repeats them without thinking. In the Qur'án, the Book that contains God's mysteries, these two infamous and similar personalities—Mírzá Yaḥyá and Muḥammad Sháh—have been likened to a "dog" who is in a collar held by Satan. Those two dogs are outwardly guardians of the people, but inwardly the slaves of Satan.

Companions of the Cave, part 7 (18:25–57)

> They remained in the Cave 300 years, add 9 to this number. Say: God knows how long they stayed in the Cave. Qur'án 18:25–26

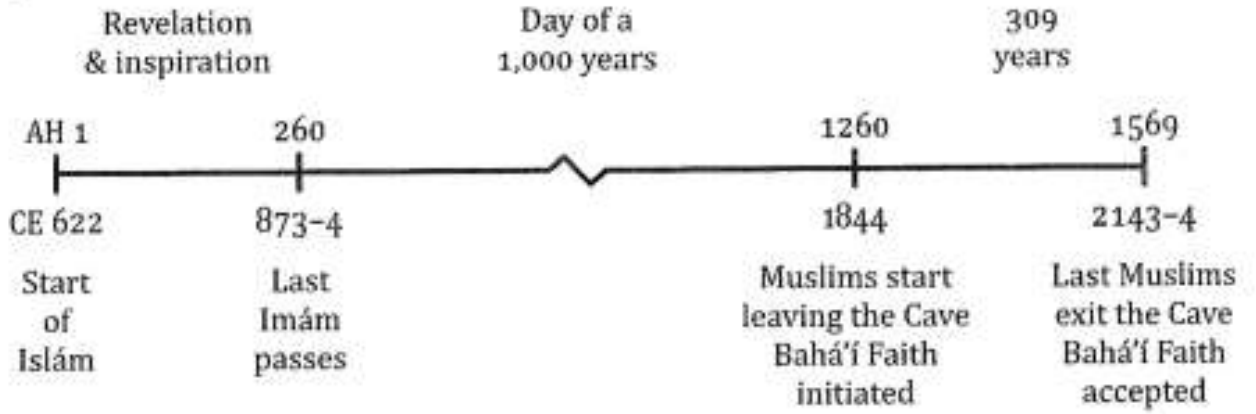
Note how the simple-hearted and ignorant Muḥammad Sháh allowed a creature incapable of even managing himself to become the manager and prime minister of the country! A man whose guidance was geomancy, the scale of his judgement was the astrolabe, and his master and manager was divination. Empty a human of all wisdom, prudence, conscience and humanity, and add the traits of deceitfulness and meanness—such is the description of Áqásí. We must weep for the people who had such a shiftless and deceitful prime minister. Some of the followers of the Báb called Áqásí the Dajjál ("the Imposter", the Islámic antichrist), and Muḥammad Sháh, the monstrous donkey on which the Imposter rides during the advent of the 12th Imám (the Qá'im).

According to *Rawḍat'uṣ-Ṣafá*, during the fourteen years of his ministry, Mírzá Áqásí usurped 1,438 civil parishes, villages and properties.

Explanation: As we saw in the beginning of the story of the Companions of the Cave, when the sun rose, some of the inhabitants of the Cave awakened and stepped out of the cave; according to those sayings, the period of dwelling in the Cave for those residents was "one day or part of a day". What is the difference between that number and the new one (1,000 and 309)? The first number (1,000 years) is a reference to the start of the exit of the occupants of the Cave; the second number (309) is most likely a reference to the conclusion of their exit. According to the prophecy of Sura 18 the Cave, the departure from the Cave takes about three centuries (309 years). At this time, we are in the middle of that period. Once that date (the end of the third century of the Bahá'í era) is reached, the majority of the inhabitants of the Cave will have stepped out of their old refuge into the new Land.

Relationship between 309 years and the spread of the Bahá'í Faith

The Qur'anic prophecy regarding the period of the departure from the Cave is consistent with a statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that for 200 more years (from the time of the writing of His letter), the Bahá'ís must strive exceedingly for the spread of the Bahá'í Faith.[89]



The two prophecies show that the propagation of the "Great Announcement" requires much patience and hard work; similarly, it took three centuries for the Faith of Christ to attain a large following.

> *This Manifestation is like unto the appearance of the son of Zachariah and Jesus, the son of Mary.*[90] Bahá'u'lláh

Question: What is the mystery of the separation of the number 9 from the number 300?

The number 9 enjoys a special importance in the Bahá'í Faith. For instance, it is equal to the interval between the appearance of the Báb and the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh first proclaimed His Cause (privately) in the Síyáh-Chál, Tehran, 9 years after the declaration of the Báb. In addition, in abjad reckoning, the number 9 is equal to the Name of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'.*

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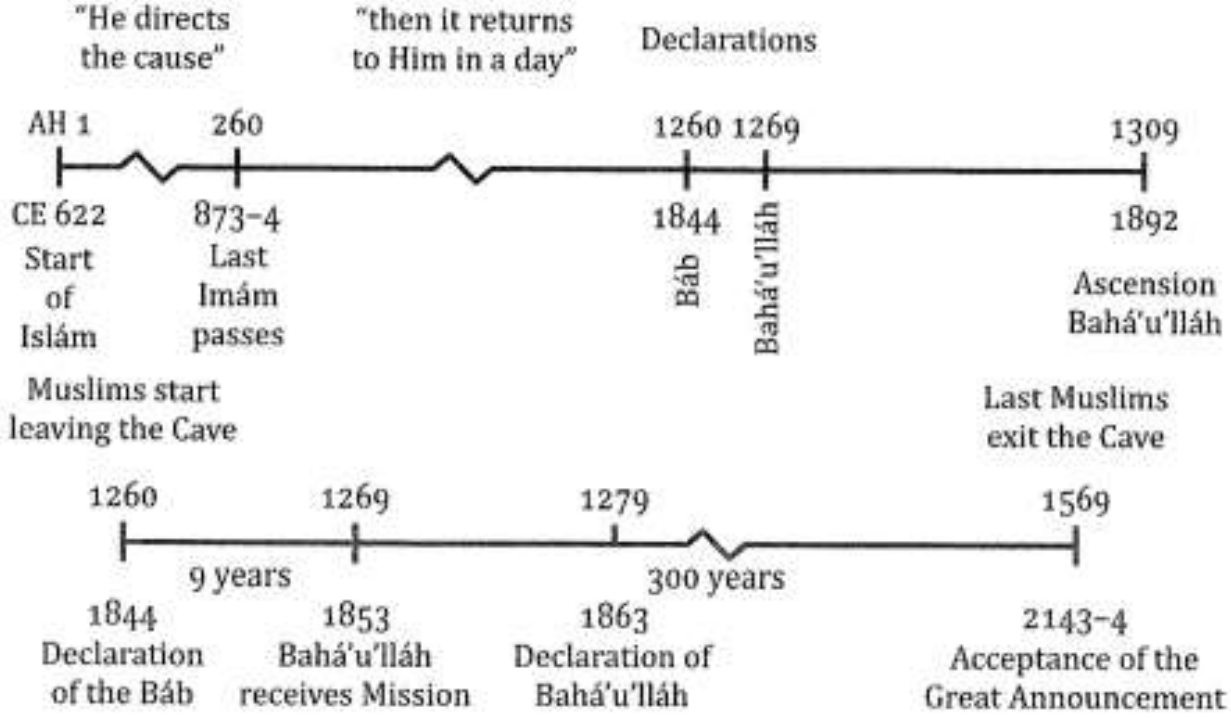
* Bahá'u'lláh declared His Cause twice. The first time was in Ṭihrán, to a few followers of the Báb who were in the prison of Síyáh-Chál with Him. The second (public) proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh occurred 19 years after the proclamation of the Bab.

The separation between the numbers 9 and 300 is a delicate reference to the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, since in addition to the number 9 being a reference to His Name and the interval between His appearance and that of the Báb, the combination of 9 and 300 makes up the last three digits of the year of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension (AH 1309, CE 1892). If we add the "one-thousand-year day, which ends at the beginning of the departure of Muslims from the Cave, to 309 (the period of the exit from the Cave) we obtain 1,309; this is equal to the year of the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. Qur'anic prophecies are all based on the calendar common among Muslims, i.e. the Muslim lunar calendar (AH—*Anno Hejirae*).

Day of a 1,000 years	Period the cave was vacated	Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh
1,000	+ 309	= 1309

Important events in the Bahá'í Faith linked to Sura 18



"After the passing of the time mentioned in the Book, the Cause of God shall be exalted and all shall turn unto it." Bahá'u'lláh

According to the above calculations from the year of the Manifestation of the Báb until the evacuation of the Cave takes 309 years; and from the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh to the time of the evacuation of the Cave will take 300 years.

Despite the doubts and misgivings in the hearts of the people, Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly promised in His Writings that in due time the Faith of God will be accepted by the generality of people throughout the world. Below are a few examples of these Writings:

*Thou hast asked concerning the exaltation of the Cause of God. For it a designated time hath been decreed in the Book of God.** [91] Bahá'u'lláh

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* In many instances in the Qur'án and in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the word "Book" or "Book of God" is used to refer to the Qur'án.

For it a fixed time hath been recorded in the Book of God.[*] [92] Bahá'u'lláh

Soon will God gather all the people under His sheltering shadow.[93] Bahá'u'lláh

Soon ye shall witness God encompassing all and victorious over all.[94] Bahá'u'lláh

In the end God will manifest the Truth to all.[95] The Báb

Soon will the light of the Cause illumine the world; albeit the people now are turned towards unbelief; a time hath been fixed and promised for its fulfillment. When that time is come, there shall appear what hath been recorded in the Books of God, the Lord of the worlds.[96] Bahá'u'lláh

The people of the world have grievously erred, for they fondly imagine that they can exterminate the Cause of God, that they would be able to extinguish His effulgent light and put out His heavenly lamps .... I swear by the righteousness of God that the more they endeavor to quench His Light, the brighter will it shine .... All beings fade into utter nothingness when confronted with the revelation of His awesome majesty.[97] Bahá'u'lláh

Be not dismayed by the delay in the affairs; every matter hath its designated time.[98] Bahá'u'lláh

Such expressions of exact signs in reference to the coming of the two Promised Ones of our age are unprecedented. Could we find such verses and signs regarding the appearance of Islam in Christian Scriptures? Let us, once again, review the numbers in this mysterious story that have been fulfilled in the Baha'i Faith:

- The year of the manifestation of the new Faith one-Day-of-a-thousand-years after the passing of of last Imam 260 + 1,000 = 1260
- The Name of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith in abjad calculation 9
- The period between the appearances of the two Promised Ones 9
- The number of political leaders to whom Bahá'u'lláh wrote 7
- The number of religious leaders addressed by Bahá'u'lláh 1
- The year of the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh 1309

In Sura 18 the Cave, part of which constitutes the story of the Companions of the Cave, reference is made to the Manifestation of the Báb. Those verses will be discussed in the next chapter. Before that discussion, it is useful to consider a few further verses from Sura 18:

> Say, the Truth has come from your Lord; whosoever wishes let him believe and whosoever desires let him deny. Qur'án 18:29

Explanation: In this verse, God gives the good news to those who accept the new Faith of God; and warns those who refuse to accept this great gift and favor of God.

> *Whosoever desireth let him attain, and whosoever desireth let him turn aside. My Lord can well dispense with you, your lives, and your doings.*[99] Bahá'u'lláh

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[*] A specific Book is not mentioned here; yet it is most likely the Qur'án that is intended.

> Is there any one more unjust than him who hears the verses of God and turns away from them? Qur'án 18:57

Explanation: Why is turning away from God's signs and verses unjust? Injustice means depriving anyone of what is rightfully due him, in this case, the right to be near to God and entrance into the eternal Paradise; this is a right gifted by God to all of us, inviting us all to that heavenly Plain.

> *Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the wine that is life indeed.*[100] Bahá'u'lláh

Heedlessness towards the "Great Announcement", which is the greatest message of joy and prosperity from God to His servants, will have drastic consequences, which is remoteness from God—this has been referred to as "Hell" in the sacred Scriptures. According to the testimony of the Qur'án, it is not possible for anyone to burden his soul with a greater injustice than this. The significance of this injustice is in the permanence of its consequences. Imagine that you have a friend who does not attach any importance to his health, and no matter how hard you try to make him aware of it, is useless to advise him. Is not his negligence an injustice against himself? Is he going to suffer the consequence of his behavior? Who should be held responsible when the consequence arises—you or him? Does a different law rule in the world of belief and conscience? If we fail to strive to protect the health of our spirit and soul, what will happen? What else can we expect but an inner affliction even unto spiritual death? Is it fair to hold others responsible for our negligence and shortcoming in the "Day of Accounting"?

> *Say, O people! Have mercy on yourselves, if ye do not have mercy on others; for the fruits of your doings return onto yourselves.*[101] Bahá'u'lláh

It is essential to heed this heavenly advice while there is yet time, and to reflect on its consequences:

> *O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.*[102] Bahá'u'lláh

Most people tend to choose the easy way, i.e., that of ignoring God's invitation. They do not investigate. Instead they parrot and ignorantly follow the prejudices and vain imaginings of their forefathers. The problem of vain imitation is of such gravity that the Qur'án repeatedly mentions it. Sura 18 the Cave is not an exception:

> Nothing prevents the people from believing, when God's guidance comes to them (the Promised One appears) but following in the ways of their forefathers. Qur'án 18:55

Consider the fate of Christians and their expectations. For two thousand years they have been expecting their Promised One, Christ, to descend from heaven. Shí'ih Muslims have also chosen the way of Christians; for over one thousand years they have been awaiting the promised Qá'im to ascend from the bottom of a well! To be attached to ancestral vain imaginings or to ignorantly follow religious leaders, is servitude and enslavement of our souls and spirits.

Why are most people disgusted by physical slavery but are willing and eager to accept spiritual slavery? As long as people do not appreciate their spiritual freedom and free their souls from the bondage of imagination and ancestral prejudices, they will never be able to recognize the Promised One of the age or to see the Light of that radiant Sun. There have been no exceptions to this rule, which is harmonious with the command and wisdom of God.

Freedom of thought and belief is a great distinction and honor for humans; animals lack such privilege and honor. Should we lose the gift of liberty, understanding and free will—which are some of God's greatest bounties—and not benefit from the fruits of these eternal honors, we would forfeit the station and superiority of being human.

Any Important decision we make in life has either a positive or negative consequence, which either brings pleasant or unpleasant reports. The same holds true for our choices in religion and faith. The acceptance of the "Great Announcement" is a glad-tiding full of joy and delight for our soul; and to ignore or reject the "Great Announcement" is likely to have dire consequences. This truth has been repeatedly stated throughout the Qur'án, including in Sura 18 the Cave:

> We send the Messengers to bring glad tidings and to warn. Qur'án 18:56

Choosing our everlasting destiny is in our own hands, there is no compulsion in this:

> Our duty is only to convey the Message. Qur'án 36:17

> If God desired all the people on earth would have believed. Do you want to compel the people to believe? Qur'án 10:99

To conquer the hearts of people through the power of God is very easy. However, this is not consistent with the way of God. God desires that the hearts of people be illumined by the Light of God through the power of reason, knowledge and utterance rather than through fear and compulsion.

> *Meekness is greatly beloved. God, exalted be His glory, hath loved and will ever love the meek.*[103] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Were it not the Will of God, exalted be His glory, none would have had the power to transgress against Him. All are held within the grasp of His might, and are feeble and abject when faced with the manifestations of His strength.*[104] Bahá'u'lláh

We shall know God through His Words

> *Ere long thine eyes will behold the standards of divine power unfurled throughout all regions, and the signs of His triumphant might and sovereignty manifest in every land.*[105] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Ere long shall theie eyes behold that which they now deny, and shall turn towards that from which now turn away.*[106] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Kingdom of victory is in the grasp of His power; if He willed it, He would conquer the world in one breath.*[107] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: This Youth hath come to quicken the world and unite all its peoples. The day is approaching when that which God hath purposed will have prevailed and thou shalt behold the earth transformed into the all-glorious paradise.[108] Bahá'u'lláh

When God's victory arrives, you shall see the people entering the Faith of God by troops. Then celebrate the praise of your Lord and beg forgiveness from Him. He is truly the All-Forgiving. Qur'án 110:1–3

When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith.[109] Bahá'u'lláh

Erelong will it encompass the earth and all that dwell therein. Thus hath it been decreed by God, and the powers of earth and heaven are unable to thwart His purpose.[110] Bahá'u'lláh

The Faith of God is endowed with penetrating might and power. Erelong that which hath flowed from Our tongue will outwardly come to pass.[111] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 242.
2 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 174.
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 255.
4 *The Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 26 (paragraph 34)
5 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 129–130.
6 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 122. (prov. tr.)
7 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh ('Andalíb), p. 162. (prov. tr.)
8 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136 (no. LXX)
9 Khatábát-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 3, p. 74.
10 ???
11 Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 7, p. 109. (prov. tr.)
12 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 83–84. (prov. tr.)
13 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 255.
14 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 42.
15 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 322–323 (no. CLII)
16 *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 211.
17 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 493. (prov. tr.)
18 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 97. (prov. tr.)
19 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 78–79.
20 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 316 (no. CXLVII)
21 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 1. (prov. tr.)
22 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 88.
23 Amr va Khalq, vol. 2, pp. 66–67. (prov. tr.)
24 Náfiy-i-Tabíín, p. 54 (2008, Irfánián, Ṣádiq)— prov. tr.
25 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 21— prov. tr.
26 *Yád-Námiy-i-Miṣbáḥ-i-Munír*, Ra'fatí, Vaḥíd, Bahá'í Publishing, Germany (2006), p. 183. (prov. tr.)
27 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 2, p. 71— prov. tr.
28 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 384. (prov. tr.)
29 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 195. (prov. tr.)
30 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 53.
31 Ḥaḍrat-i-Báb, p. 191. (prov. tr.)
32 *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 76–77.
33 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 61 (gr. 3.10)
34 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 200. (prov. tr.)

35 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 27 (no. XXIV)
36 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 184–185. (prov. tr.)
37 *Selections from the Writings of the Bab*, p. 156.
38 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 32 (gr. 38)
39 Irfánián, Ṣádiq—Náfiy-i-Maknún, p. 170. (prov. tr.)
40 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, volume 7, p. 32. (prov. tr.)
41 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 114.
42 Suhráb, Ináyatu'lláh—Mabádí-i-Istidlál, p. 364.
43 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 13. (prov. tr.)
44 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 58. (prov. tr.)
45 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 2, p. 71. (prov. tr.)
46 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 83. (prov. tr.)
47 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 194.
48 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim 'Ahd-i-A'lá (The Life of the Bab), p. 104. (prov. tr.)
49 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim 'Ahd-i-A'lá (The Life of the Bab), p. 104. (prov. tr.)
50 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 16.
51 Asráru'l-Áthár, letters "bá'" through "thá'", p. 56. (prov. tr.)
52 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 70 (gr. 4.11)
53 *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 16–17.
54 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, pp. 87–88. (prov. tr.)
55 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 23.
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71 Nár va Núr, p. 16. (prov. tr.)
72 Nár va Núr, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
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74 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 139–140.
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77 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 206.
78 The Bayán, p. 173.
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95 Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 16. (prov. tr.)
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98 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 45. (prov. tr.)
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100 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 45–46 (no. XVIII)
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108 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 144.
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110 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 142.
111 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 63 (gr. 3.15)

11
Sura 18 the Cave: The Báb

The Verses Related to The Manifestation of the Báb

After reviewing the many signs and proofs regarding the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, Sura 18 the Cave informs us about the Manifestation of the Báb. The sura refers to a barrier (18:94–97) that is so strong and solid that no one can remove or destroy it. After mentioning this barrier, the reporter gives us the following glad-tiding:

> He said: This is a blessing from my Lord; when the time for the "promise" of my Lord is come, He will destroy the barrier. God's "promise" is true; on that Day, we shall free them to mix with one another like the waves [of the sea].
>
> Qur'án 18:98–99

Explanation: These verses are a prelude to the Manifestation of the Báb. Here the one who gives the news speaks of a universal change and the closeness and association of people of our time. This transformation began with the founding of the Faith of the Báb. Consider the first announcement that was transmitted through the invention of telegraph. That announcement was made one day after the declaration of the Báb as if proclaiming the news of His Advent to the people of the world through the following verse of Hebrew Scriptures:

> See what God hath done! Numbers 23:23

After thousands of years of separation, suddenly the people of our time were connected to each other, and according to the prophecy of Sura 18 the Cave, like waves of the sea were set in in motion and association with one another. The Bahá'í Faith has appeared so that, with the help of God, these worldwide moving waves associate with one another with utmost tranquility and order; and hereafter are no longer to be the cause of floods and destruction. Again, the above verses from the Qur'án use the special word related to the puzzle of the Qur'án: the "promise". This is the promise of the appearance of the new Faith of God with a world-embracing vision.

> *O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.*[1]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> There was a blast in the Trumpet, and We gathered them together. Qur'án 18:99

Explanation: At the time of the appearance of the Promised One, the receptive and awakened souls from various groups will gather together and join the same Faith. Others will become aware of the appearance of the Promised One, but due to negligence and vain imitation, they will refuse to accept the truth of His Words and to profess sincerity and servitude to His court of majesty. They will gather together to become the band of deniers.

> *Say: By God! The blast hath been blown on the trumpet, and lo, mankind hath swooned away before us! .... Speed out of your sepulchers. How long will ye sleep?*[2]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The time of the appearance of the Promised One is the season of Resurrection and arising of the people of the world. Those who hear the Call of God with inner ears will free themselves from the depths of the darkness of negligence to gain a new life and attain to the eternal Light. After passing through this world, their belief in the Promised One will gain them admittance into the highest Heaven and a new life in that limitless Plain. According to a ḥadíth, "the believer is alive in both worlds". However, those who busy themselves only with the affairs of this world, will not hear the Call of God and will not arise from the tomb of negligence; at the end of their journey through this world, such people are deprived of the gift of Resurrection, which is the fountainhead of spiritual life.

> *Say: The shout hath been raised, and the people have come forth from their graves .... Some have made haste to attain the court of the God of Mercy, others have fallen down on their faces in the fire of Hell, while still others are lost in bewilderment.*[3]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Well is it with the slumberer who is stirred by the Breeze of God and ariseth from amongst the dead, directing his steps towards the Way of the Lord. Verily, such a man is regarded, in the sight of God, the True One, as a jewel amongst men and is reckoned with the blissful.*[4]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Let us continue with the study of the verses of Sura 18 the Cave.

> On that Day We offer Hell for the unbelievers [deniers of Truth]; [these deniers are] those who, because their eyes are covered by veils, cannot see My Remembrance [God's Remembrance]. They have no hearing ears [are not capable of hearing the Great News].
> Qur'án 18:100–1

Explanation: These verses again speak of "the veil"; this is a covering that deprives the people from seeing and hearing the wondrous words of the Promised One. According to these verses only those who have removed the veils of prejudice and vain imitation from their eyes and ears are worthy of the recognition of God's Messengers.

In the above verses another mystery is also hidden that is considered one of the important signs of the "puzzle of the Qur'án". That mystery is recorded in the word "Dhikr" (Remembrance). Let us see the verse again:

> ... those who, because their eyes are covered by veils, cannot see My Remembrance [*Dhikrí*].

According to this verse, in order to see "My Remembrance", i.e. God's Remembrance, and hear His Words, we must remove the "veil" from our eyes and ears. As we have seen before, *Dhikr* or *Dhikru'lláh* ("God's Remembrance") is an important title of the Báb. In the Writings of our two Promised Ones, these or similar titles have repeatedly been used to refer to the Báb. Note the following examples:

... be not of those who have turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Praised[5] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by your true Lord, by Him Who is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth, that the divine Promise concerning His Remembrance is naught but the sovereign truth and, as decreed in the Mother Book, it shall come to pass ....[6] The Báb

Those before you who repudiated Our verses, We called to account by reason of that which their hands had unjustly wrought, and in punishment for their falsehoods; but those who follow the verses of the Remembrance revealed from Our presence are numbered among the ones guided aright.[7] The Báb

With each and every Prophet Whom We have sent down in the past, We have established a separate Covenant concerning the Remembrance of God and His Day.[8] The Báb

The following verse from Sura 18 the Cave gives us the title of the Báb, "*Dhikr*" (the Remembrance):

> Be with those who call on God at the dawn time and in the night season, and seek His Face .... And do not follow him whom We made negligent of Our Remembrance [*Dhikrinà*], one who has followed the promptings of his corrupt inclinations, and overstepped his bounds. Qur'án 18:28

Explanation: This verse asks every believer to associate with the righteous believers, and not to follow anyone who is negligent of God's Remembrance. This prophecy and this advice about Mírzá Yaḥyá were fulfilled because he betrayed the Báb and misled a number of His followers.

Dhikr or My *Dhikr* in reference to the Báb has been used in other suras of the Qur'án. As an example, note the following verses of Sura 20 *Ṭá-Há'* that are mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh at the end of *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*:

> Whosoever turns away from My remembrance [*Dhikrí*], truly his shall be a life of misery; and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall raise him up blind; he will say: "O Lord, I had sight, why did you raise me up blind?" God will say: You forgot my signs and guidance, and this Day you are forgotten. Qur'án 20:124–126

Let us continue to study further verses of Sura 18 the Cave:

> Have the unbelievers imagined that they can take My servants as their friends and supporters, instead of Me? We have prepared the Hell to receive such unbelievers. Qur'án 18:102

Explanation: We have a tendency to follow the majority, as we see 'safety in numbers'. However, in these verses, the compassionate God teaches us that we must only look to Him for guidance and renounce all others; inasmuch as, on the Day of Reckoning, none except God can save us; those we may consider as supporters, or having wisdom and knowledge, are not even capable of rescuing themselves, much less being able to save us.

We can see in the above verse, once again, that God warns us about vain imitation. Why has this topic been so emphasized and repeated in the Qur'án? Two reasons come to mind. First, because of the immense power of this enormously dangerous error; the veil of imitation is so widespread that it has

dominated the world, and it is so thick that it has covered the beauty and grandeur of the Sun. Secondly, because of the seriousness of this sin; imitation in religion is a great insult to God. Consider these examples: Whenever people want to buy shoes and socks, they first search for those of the best quality. Is the value and importance of choosing a religion—on which everyone's eternal destiny is dependent—any less important than choosing shoes and socks? When people want to buy toys for their children they search for the most suitable toys. Is choosing a religion less important than choosing toys? Why is that people place so little value on their eternal destiny? Think deeply about this.

> *To gain the benefits of this world, man perceiveth himself in need of many means and turneth his efforts towards their acquisition, though he is assured of their transient and mortal nature. However, he hath made no provisions for the world where he must reside as long as the Kingdoms of heaven and earth shall endure.*[9]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: O people! Busy yourselves with praiseworthy deeds, ere death come upon you. Seize your chance before it is lost; for your end shall come without warning. I swear by God, at that moment strongholds and armies shall not protect you. Hearken unto the voice of this Wronged one. He admonisheth you for the sake of God, and counseleth you as a token of His grace.*[10]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

If we desired to see the essence of the Qur'án in one short selection, which would that be? It would be from two of the verses in Sura 39 al-Zumar. If people accept these verses with heart and soul, and make them a guidance for their life, the earth will be transformed into the highest Heaven:

> Give the glad-tidings to those servants who hear all words and follow the best of them. God guides these people and they are endued with understanding.
>
> Qur'án 39:17–18

Similar statements also exist in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings:

> *The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.*[11]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

If one always adheres to justice, frees one's heart and soul from idle fancy and vain imaginings of one's ancestors, and is not hasty in judgement but reflects deeply on every matter—especially those concerned with moral and spiritual matters on which one's eternal destiny is dependent—and after search and investigation in all things judges carefully, one will be successful in all things and will achieve eternal prosperity and tranquility. This is because one has not only applied his God-given powers according to God's Will but also enjoys God's help and support.

> Those (seekers) are guided by God and are endued with understanding.
>
> Qur'án 38:18

Note that God promises us that if we seek and investigate, He will come to our aid and show us the straight Path. Our use of His great gifts of reason and

intellect—which he has given us for this purpose—will help us to distinguish between right and wrong.

What can we expect from closed eyes, or from closed minds? Can a mind that is enslaved recognize the precious gem of Truth? Can a soul that has abandoned the gift of freedom and knowledge be worthy of seeing God's beauty and glory? If we do not use the gifts of reason and intellect, the signs of which are thought and investigation, and the lack thereof is blind imitation, are we worthy of God's aid and support? Therefore, God's aid and accompaniment are always dependent on our wise search and striving.

Man's wise endeavor ⟶ Truth ⟵ God's aid and support

> *The light of the world-embracing Sun hath illumined the whole earth, and hath revived the dispirited and despondent world. Happy is the eye that hath observed and recognized. Beseech the All-Sufficing God to disclose the secret of His Day, and revive thee with a new life. He is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

Let us continue with the study of Sura 18 the Cave:

> Say! Do you want to know whose deeds are wasted (remain unrewarded)? Those who see their salvation in the life of this world and imagine they are doing good work. Qur'án 18:103–4

Explanation: How great the number of people who imagine that the secret of happiness is in accumulation of wealth, unaware that, in the end, their struggle for acquisition of the benefits of this world will come to nothing; inasmuch as intense attention to the world prevents them from seeing and recognizing the Promised One of the age.

> They are those who deny the verses of God and (the promise of) meeting Him; (for this reason) their deeds shall come to naught, and on the Day of Resurrection shall have no value (on that Day they will not be rewarded for their endeavors). Qur'án 18:105

Explanation: The expression "the presence of God" or "meeting God" is allegorical and one of the important mysteries of the "puzzle of the Qur'án"; Muslim divines are not aware of its meaning. As we will see in chapter 13, this expression has been used in holy Scriptures to refer to the manifestation and rising of God's power and majesty in the two Promised Ones of our age, who can be described as Manifestations of the names and attributes of God.

Clearly, those who deny the promise of meeting God will surely deny the Promised One Who claims to be the fulfillment of that promise. How can these deniers convince themselves that they are the recipient of the kindness and generosity of God? The source of their satisfaction and the axis of their pride is

their imagined praiseworthy behavior. God warns them that their vain imaginations will lead to a great error, inasmuch as denial of God's Promised One shall nullify their good works. This truth has also been confirmed in the Bahá'í Writings. Note the following verse from the letter of the Báb to Muḥammad Sháh:

> *Ever since the Cause of thy Lord hath appeared none of thy deeds hath been acceptable, and thou hast been lost in palpable error ....*[14] The Báb

The Sharif of Mecca, Sharíf Muḥammad, was also addressed by the Báb with a similar statement:

> *Whoso hath denied the verses of this Book shall find none of his deeds acceptable to God, and shall find himself in grievous error.*[15] The Báb

The first command of God to His servants is belief accompanied by action. According to God's commandment and wisdom, belief in the chosen One of the Age and praiseworthy deeds must be combined; otherwise, each one separately is useless and shall come to naught. Notice the first verse of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:

> The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws .... Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. ... These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other.[16] Bahá'u'lláh

Let us continue the study of Sura 18 the Cave.

> The punishment for these people is Hell; inasmuch as they are in denial and consider My signs and My Messengers as naught [vain]. Qur'án 18:106

Explanation: Why is Hell the punishment for deniers? Denial of the Promised One of God is the greatest insult against God. This insult is so great that God rejects even the praiseworthy deeds of the deniers. Therefore, what other abode is suitable for those who have committed such a great sin and rejected the good-pleasure of God?

As we saw in verse 98, the speaker of these verses refers to the certainty of the "promise" (my God's promise is true). Why use the word "promise"? Is it about the past or the future? Clearly a promise is related to the future; it is evident that it refers to an event, the fulfillment of which is awaited by the people. Note that Sura 18 the Cave gives us the glad-tidings regarding the appearance of the Promised Ones of our time, by using the words "My Messengers" in the verse 106. The word "Messengers" indicates that the "promise" in the Qur'án is related to the coming of more than one Messenger. Therefore, it should not be a surprise that this glad-tiding has been referred to as "the Great Announcement"; the news of the coming of two independent Messengers, each of Whom carry the Name of God, and are the Manifestations of His grandeur, power and beauty—is unprecedented. This great and matchless gift is a sign of the blessing and bounty of God towards the people of our time. "*This is a blessing from my Lord*". (18:98)

Appreciate the value of the Days of God, the like of which hath never before dawned.[17] The Báb

The Lord of the world is come; His Way is unlike other ways, and His Words unkike other words. Hearken and come forth. This blessed Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer. This is the Word of God.[18] Bahá'u'lláh

It is befitting to end this chapter with the last verse of Sura 18 the Cave:

Say: I am a man like you. Revelation comes to me that your God is one God; then whoever desires to meet his Lord must have praiseworthy deeds, and worship no one except his Lord. Qur'án 18:110

How does the above verse relate to the appearance of the two Messengers of our time? Note the following points:

- **"I am a man like you ...."** People always expect their Messenger to be an extraordinary human; whereas according to God's testimony, this expectation is baseless and a vain imagining. Never has a Messenger appeared or will appear who is different from others in appearance. This has been a major reason for rejecting former Messengers. People have always said: What kind of a Messenger is this, he eats like us, tires, sleeps and even becomes ill?

  The people of our age are no exception. Many cannot accept that it is possible that the All-Knowing and the Almighty God would choose a 25-year-old youth from Shiraz as the Qá'im, and appoint Him as the Promised One for all people in the world. Such people are unaware that the compassionate God always hides the greatness, power, glory and beauty of His chosen Ones behind the veil of patience and meekness, so that only those possessed of insight may recognize Their station, and be admitted to Their heavenly and eternal Court. Shortsighted and worldly people only see the outward appearance, are far removed and unaware of the inner reality. Rúmí has said it beautifully:

  We look upon the inner state and condition
  we behold not the outward state or words

- **"Then whoever desires to meet God ...."** As we mentioned before, the promise of "meeting God" is related to the manifestation and rising of the two Promised Ones of our time. This "promise" is often found in other heavenly Scriptures and must be considered one of the clearest signs of the "Puzzle of the Qur'án".
- **"Must have praiseworthy deeds and worship only one God"**. What are the conditions for "Meeting God"? According to the above verses, one condition is doing good deeds (being righteous). In all the heavenly Scriptures the compassionate God has given the promise of faith in His Messengers only to the righteous and virtuous servants; and has hidden from strangers, behind a thousand veils, the beauty and grandeur of Their station.

According to the verse 18:110, the other condition for seeing the Beauty of God is the worship of One God. What is the meaning of the "worship of One God"? The first sign of the worship of One God is attraction, love and observance of His commandments. However, the people of our time have turned away from the worship of God, turning instead to the worship of self and the world. Many new idols have appeared in this age. For example, the idols of worldly riches in the pursuit of which most people spend the most precious hours of their lives; and ardently desire its attainment. At the end of their earthly life, they leave that "lifeless idol" to others and empty-handed hasten to the eternal world.

> *O servants! Lifeless is the body that is bereft of a soul, and withered the heart that is devoid of the remembrance of its Lord. Commune with the remembrance of the Friend and shun the enemy. Your enemy is such things as ye have acquired of your own inclination, to which ye have firmly clung, and whereby ye have sullied your souls. The soul hath been created for the remembrance of the Friend; safeguard its purity.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

Another idol of our age is the vain imaginings and baseless prejudices of former generations in the worship of which people have busied themselves , and sometimes, even sacrifice life to protect them. Imitation of the idle fancies of one's forefathers does not allow for curiosity or search; worship of the world does not leave any chance for the worship of God.

> *Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

> *People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto names, they deprive themselves of the inner reality ....*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

Therefore, the other condition for "Meeting God" is being in love; those desirous of meeting God must be righteous and lovers of the Beauty of God. Sincere lovers can only see God, and utterly eschew the vain imaginings of their ancestors and the judgement of misguided and ignorant religious leaders. Except for self-sacrificing and righteous lovers, none is permitted to the Court of God or has any hope of meeting Him.

Again, we learn that our faith is in our own hands and in God's hands.

> None is given the gift of faith except by God's leave. God places a veil over [the soul of] those who do not think or perceive. Qur'án 10:100

> *Through His* [God's] *perfect power He hath created the heaven of utterance, and hath raised it to a height that is sanctified above the touch of the stranger, or the understanding of an unchaste friend.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

Everywhere there is mention of the heart:

> *Purify your hearts and illumine your souls, that ye may distinguish the truth from falsehood.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh

When the human heart becomes worthy of the Light of God, like a polished mirror, it becomes illumined by the Light of the Sun of Truth, and will reflect the

Beauty of God; otherwise, like a candle, it will burn in the sorrow of remoteness from the Beloved, and will, at all times, lament with regret its separation from the Beloved.

> *Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence? These are the appointed days which ye have been yearningly awaiting in the past—the days of the advent of divine justice. Render ye thanks unto God, O ye concourse of believers.*[24]
>
> The Báb

> *Through the tongue of all the Manifestations of the Cause (Messengers) the promise of the Day of Resurrection hath been given; according to that promise, all religions are expecting it. As the utterances of the Prophets and the chosen Ones are full of mystery, each person has a thought and an intention; each one has a desire and aim. But since none recognized the Truth, they followed that path of tales, and were deprived of truth and reality. Those wrapped in veils are behind the veils of vein imaginings and are deprived of the straight Path.*[25]
>
> Ṭáhirih

1 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 164, or *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 9 (gr. 1.15)
2 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 43–44 (no. XVIII)
3 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 41–42 (no. XVII)
4 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 13.
5 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 13.
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 58.
7 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim, 'Ahd-i-A'lá (the Life of the Báb), p. 107. (prov. tr.)
8 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 68.
9 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 311. (prov. tr.)
10 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 311. (prov. tr.)
11 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 157.
12 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 58. (prov. tr.)
13 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169.
14 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 25.
15 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim, 'Ahd-i-A'lá (the Life of the Báb), p. 104. (prov. tr.)
16 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 1, p. 19.
17 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim, 'Ahd-i-A'lá (the Life of the Báb), p. 298. (prov. tr.)
18 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 16. (prov. tr.)
19 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 68 (gr. 4.5)
20 *The Hidden Words* by Bahá'u'lláh, Persian #45 (p. 38)
21 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58.
22 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, pp. 312–313. (prov. tr.)
23 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 326. (prov. tr.)
24 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
25 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 364–365. (prov. tr.)

12
Sura 74 *al-Muddaththir*
The enemies of God's plan

The Cause of God is made manifest, and the hosts of the earth are unable to thwart its purpose.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

In common with the holy Books of the Jews and Christians, the Qur'án is an encyclopedia of signs and "glad-tidings" regarding the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. Most of these signs and announcements are hidden behind veils of mystery and allusion. However, as soon as these veils are removed, the mysteries and allusions become clear and manifest.

Sura 74 *al-Muddaththir* is a short sura in which many mysteries are hidden amidst the beauty of God's Words, manifested throughout its poetic verses. From beginning to end, the sura embodies the prophecies about the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. In particular, the description of the important historical events of the Faith is revealed in the mold of mystery. Only with the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our age have the concealed meanings in the sura been disclosed. The sura can be divided into five parts:

1. The story of a turban-headed man who resists the Promised One and schemes to annihilate Him (verses 1–35).
2. The choice of the number 19 to test the people, to confuse the deniers, and to assure the believers (verses 26–31).
3. The announcement of the two Promised Ones of our age, and people's freedom to accept or deny Them (verses 32–38).
4. The fate of the believers and the deniers in the eternal world (verses 39–53).
5. The aim of these verses and announcements (verses 54–56).

The sad main story of Sura 74 *al-Muddaththir* relates the actions of a powerful and deceitful mujtahid named Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn Ṭihráni—Shaykhu'l-'Iráqayn—who, during Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád, was voraciously vindictive in opposing Bahá'u'lláh and His companions. Even Náṣir'd-Dín Sháh, who has been called the "Chief of Tyrants", could not control this haughty and ambitious mujtahid. The Sháh sought to be free of him by sending him to 'Iráq under the pretext of sending him there to repair the holy places.

For reasons beyond the scope of our present discussion, during His stay in 'Iráq Bahá'u'lláh enjoyed the immense respect of the inhabitants of that city, from ordinary people to the learned and rulers. Seeing this, aroused the intense envy of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn who was moved to make intense efforts to oppose Bahá'u'lláh. The fire of hate and envy was so intense in this sly Shaykh that it seemed he had no desire save the annihilation of that Promised One. To achieve his purpose, he devised and carried out at least seven schemes:

- His first scheme was to obtain an order from the governor of Baghdád for the arrest and exile of Bahá'u'lláh to Iran. This plan failed.
- He then decided to arouse the prejudices and feeling of the people of Baghdád against the Bahá'ís. To succeed in this aim, he spread abroad that he had been inspired by a dream, in order to put a stamp of confirmation on his sinister aims. This plot also came to nothing.
- After this failure, he came up with another plot. He invited the Iranian counsel in Baghdád to help him incite the fanatical people of Baghdád to protest against Bahá'u'lláh in the hope that the Bahá'ís would react and seek revenge. This would give them the excuse to obtain an order for the exile of Bahá'u'lláh to Iran. This scheme also came to naught.
- Next, he decided to murder Bahá'u'lláh. He hired a murderer named Riḍá to attack Bahá'u'lláh when He was at the public bath-house. Riḍá entered with a concealed weapon. However, when he saw Bahá'u'lláh, he was overcome with such agitation that he found himself unable to carry out his plan.
- With the incitement and support of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, Riḍá attempted a second attack on Bahá'u'lláh at another location in Baghdád. However, when he approached Bahá'u'lláh, once again, he became so agitated and fearful that the weapon fell out of his hand. Bahá'u'lláh then instructed His brother to give the man his weapon and show him the way to his home.
- Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn's next scheme was to convince Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh that Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád was a source of danger to the Sháh. He sent extensive, false reports to the court of the king that exaggerated the influence and power of Bahá'u'lláh over the people. He claimed the nomadic Arab tribes supported Bahá'u'lláh, to the extent that He could mobilize one hundred thousand armed men in one day. He also claimed Bahá'u'lláh could, with the help of some of the leaders and governors in Iran, incite the Iranians in Baghdád against the Sháh. After extensive efforts, he succeeded in obtaining an order from the Sháh for the clergy and leaders of Baghdád to assist him in banishing Bahá'u'lláh.

Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn used the Sháh's authorization to assemble the religious leaders together to help him achieve his purpose. However, once again, his plan came to naught; because after some discussion, the head of the gathering, Shaykh Murtiḍa Anṣárí,* who was the head of the Shí'ih Muslims, expressed his opposition and abruptly left the meeting.

> Frustrated in their designs, but unrelenting in their hostility, the assembled divines delegated the learned and devout Ḥájí Mullá Ḥasan-i-'Ammú, recognized for his integrity and wisdom, to submit various questions to Bahá'u'lláh for elucidation. When these were submitted, and answers completely satisfactory to

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* Shaykh Ansárí ... the greatest religious leader of his time .... Kept aloof of politics, in such way that when they went to him to obtain his sanction (Fatwá) of apostasy for Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb, he refused to declare Him an apostate; saying: I am not familiar with His state and His utterances. (*Rah-Áward* magazine, no. 44, pp. 14–15)

An astonishing thing is that a grandson of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, Fáḍil-i-Ṭihráni, became a Bahá'í and rendered great services for the propagation of the Bahá'í Faith.

> the messenger were given, Ḥájí Mullá Ḥasan, affirming the recognition by the 'ulamás of the vastness of the knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh, asked, as an evidence of the truth of His mission, for a miracle that would satisfy completely all concerned. "Although you have no right to ask this," Bahá'u'lláh replied, "for God should test His creatures, and they should not test God, still I allow and accept this request .... The 'ulamás must assemble, and, with one accord, choose one miracle, and write that, after the performance of this miracle they will no longer entertain doubts about Me, and that all will acknowledge and confess the truth of My Cause. Let them seal this paper, and bring it to Me. This must be the accepted criterion: if the miracle is performed, no doubt will remain for them; and if not, We shall be convicted of imposture." This clear, challenging and courageous reply, unexampled in the annals of any religion, and addressed to the most illustrious Shí'ih divines, assembled in their time-honored stronghold, was so satisfactory to their envoy that he instantly arose, kissed the knee of Bahá'u'lláh, and departed to deliver His message. Three days later he sent word that that august assemblage had failed to arrive at a decision, and had chosen to drop the matter, a decision to which he himself later gave wide publicity, in the course of his visit to Persia, and even communicated it in person to the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mírzá Sa'íd Khán.[2]

When people asked Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, for a miracle, what was His answer?

> Say! Glorified be My Lord! Am I more than a man, the Messenger of God?
>
> Qur'án 17:93

The above verse demonstrates that the Apostle of God was not given permission to perform a miracle. Why then was such a permission given to Bahá'u'lláh? The following may clarify the matter. If Bahá'u'lláh had given a negative answer to the divines, what would have happened? A refusal to perform a miracle would have provided Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn with a powerful weapon to use against Bahá'u'lláh! Besides, Bahá'u'lláh already knew that the divines were, to some extent, aware of His power, would be apprehensive about signing a letter which would have jeopardized their position and rank, and would not have consented to do it.

As we see, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, a powerful mujtahid who was perhaps unmatched in deceit and hypocrisy, found himself impotent when faced with a divine decree, and all his schemes came to naught. Let us see how the glorious Qur'án informs us about these events.

The mujtahid who resisted the Promised One

> O ye who have wrapped thyself! Qur'án 74:1

Explanation: This sura is addressed to a person who has been called "Mudaththir"(one who has wrapped himself up" in clothing or a cloak). This can be interpreted outwardly or inwardly:

- In appearance: What group of people cover themselves more than others? What group always cover their heads in public, hidden under cloth? Aren't these Muslim clergy who wear a turban?
- Symbolically: What group of people cover their souls, who are outwardly polished and yet inwardly lacking? These are the hypocrites; the Qur'án sometimes refers to them as Jinn.

After the above description, God commands the addressed person to prepare himself for the acceptance of the Promised One:

> Arise and be warned. * Qur'án 74:2
>
> And honor thy Lord. Qur'án 74:3

Then he is asked to purify his attire:

> Purify your attire (possess the qualities of the righteous). Qur'án 74:4

A "clean garment" is a symbol of a "pure character". Cleansing one's garment means cleansing one's soul from the dust of evil. The unclean is not worthy of God's recognition or the gift of faith.

> The garment of righteousness is the fairest. Qur'án 7:26

Then this turbaned man is asked to cease his evil behavior and not to expect payment above what he gives

> Eschew evil deeds. 74:5
>
> And do not expect more than you give. 74:6

Explanation: The behavior of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn demonstrated that he was bereft of the gift of faith and attributes of the righteous (virtues). Instead of serving the Promised One and honoring Him, he esteemed himself. Furthermore he was greedy; the more he received, the more he demanded. The command to "eschew evil" is a reference to the Shaykh's schemes in fighting the Promised One.

> Be patient for [the manifestation of] thy Lord. 74:7

Explanation: "To be patient for the appearance of the Lord" (Meaning the Promised One Who appears with the title of the "Lord"). This is an advice that has repeatedly been given in the Qur'án and the Bible:

> Be still for the Lord and wait patiently for him. Psalms 37:7

After the above verses, a new subject is suddenly introduced. Howver, it is connected to the command "Be patent ... in verse 74:7:

> When there is a blast of the trumpet, it is a difficult Day [it is not easy for the faithless people]. Qur'án 74:8–9

Explanation: As will be discussed in detail in chapter 20, the "blast of the trumpet" is a reference to the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

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* This verse may also be translated as "Arise and give warning", as the duty of religious leaders is to guide and give warning.

That great Day, began with the rising of the promised Qá'im, i.e. the manifestation of the Báb. Why is the Day of Resurrection a hard Day? Because it is the "Day of decision". Had Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn not been faced with this Day and this Event, he would not have had this difficulty. The Day of Resurrection placed his inner powers to the utmost test, and disclosed the impurity of his soul. Besides, the denial of the Promised One is an ancient tradition followed by most people. For many people facing their greatest decision—the acceptance or rejection of the Promised One—is a difficult and unpleasant task.

After the mention of the Resurrection, which is of a general nature, once again, the Qur'án turns its attention to the intended individual. In the next verses, the wrath of God towards this deceitful and revengeful man becomes even clearer:

> Leave me with the one I created (to deal with him).
> I gave him a vast wealth.
> And sons to support him.
> Made his life easy.
> But he became greedy and wanted more. Qur'án 74:11–15

> In no way! As he resisted Our signs and verses; I shall make life difficult for him. Qur'án 74:16–17

Explanation: Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn—an influential mujtahid—though immensely endowed with all the riches of this world, was, nevertheless, not satisfied. He envied the station of Bahá'u'lláh, coveting all He possessed and more. In *God Passes By*, which is a history of the Bahá'í Faith, we read that:

> He it was whom Bahá'u'lláh had stigmatized in His Tablets by such epithets as the "scoundrel," the "schemer," the "wicked one," who "drew the sword of his self against the face of God," "in whose soul Satan hath whispered," and "from whose impiety Satan flies," the "depraved one," "from whom originated and to whom will return all infidelity, cruelty and crime."[3]

As an ultimatum, Bahá'u'lláh invited the Shaykh to meet with Him in a specific place to discuss the truth; he accepted this invitation, but broke his promise and did not appear at the agreed upon place. In the following Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh refers to this matter:

> *O Ḥusayn, who deceived Ḥusayn and murdered Ḥusayn! O heedless doubter! We desired thy presence in 'Iráq and empowered thee to decide the place of meeting, in order to manifest to thee the incontrovertible proofs. Thou didst accept the offer; but when the appointed time arrived, the breezes wafted and lo, thou didst take flight -- O thou who art as a fly!*
>
> *We came to the appointed place of meeting and did not find thee there, O thou Who hast joined partners with God, He Who causeth the winds to blow. Realizing thine impotence, thou didst hide thyself, O deceitful one!*
>
> *We did not seek thy company except to perfect God's proofs to thee and those who associate with thee, that perchance the flame of enmity might be quenched in thy heart and the hearts of those who have denied the Lord of lords. Thou hast turned*

away from Our face, though the dwellers of Paradise and the inhabitants of the sanctified Mansions eagerly sought Our company.

Soon, thou shalt lament and bemoan thy state, yet find no sanctuary. Instead, the wrath of God shall be upon thee. Soon will the winds of torment overtake thee and cast thee into the Hell-Fire. Verily, the merciful God hath appeared in the shadow of utterance. The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Compelling.[4]

Let us continue to examine the remaining signs and verses regarding this deceitful and hate-mongering shaykh:

He thought and schemed.
Woe to him! How he schemed!
Again, woe to him! How he schemed! Qur'án 74:18–20

Explanation: The above verses refer to a deceitful person who is greatly skilled in intrigue and hypocrisy. The persistence of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, and his craftiness in "plotting" is rare and astonishing. The holy Qur'án mentioned "schemed" once and "How he schemed!" twice, demonstrating the skillfulness of this deceitful man in expressing his enmity toward the Promised One.

Then he looked around.
Then he frowned and scowled.
Then he turned away and felt haughty.
Then he said: This is a magic; it is nothing new.
This is only the word of man [not God]. Qur'án 74:21–25

Explanation: These verses explain the feelings and thoughts of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn regarding Bahá'u'lláh's response to his and his supporters' request. There is no doubt that Bahá'u'lláh's consent to produce a miracle greatly astonished the Shaykh. He did not believe that Bahá'u'lláh would accept the request of the clergy; otherwise, he would never have considered such a plan. The only way to face the unexpected response was to counter with accusations of "witchcraft" or "magic":

Then he said: This is magic; it is nothing new! Qur'án 74:24

As we mentioned before, those who asked for a miracle, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn being the chief of them, said:

This man is an enchanter; perhaps he will perform some enchantment, and then we shall have no recourse.[5] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Thus We intended, in 'Iráq, to gather with the divines of the age. As soon as they heard this, they fled and said: "He is without doubt a sorcerer".[6] Bahá'u'lláh

The accusation of sorcery against the Messengers of God and their Words is not new:

The oppressors say: You (the Muslims) follow a bewitched man. Qur'án 17:47

Those who rejected the Truth when it came unto them, said: "This is naught but clear sorcery". Qur'án 34:43

Some they charged with lunacy, to some they imputed sorcery, and still others they called imposters.[7] Bahá'u'lláh

In the above verses, there is yet another sign that confirms their relationship with the events being considered:

Then he said .... This is not but the word of man [not God]. Qur'án 72:24–25

The above verse shows that a person has declared Himself a Messenger, and another person has denied His station and considered His words only those of a man, not as Revelation from God.

Every religious leader is supposed to guide his followers to the straight Path, not to the path of corruption and destruction. What should be the punishment, in the eternal world, for such a malicious and deceitful person?

Soon I will cast him into the Hell-Fire.
How should I describe what Hell-Fire is?
It neither lets live nor doth it release.
Man's color will change. 74:26–29

Explanation: That same Creator who—in the Qur'án—warns this deceitful and cruel leader of the torment of the eternal world and Hell-Fire, once again, in this age, informs him as follows:

Soon will the winds of torment overtake thee and cast thee into the Hell-Fire. Verily, the Merciful God hath appeared in the shadows of utterance. The Kingdom is Gods'. The Almighty, the All-Compelling.[8] Bahá'u'lláh

In many of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh asks God to aid the deniers of Truth, perchance they may be guided to the light of knowledge and faith:

I beseech God, exalted be His glory, to aid those who have turned away and denied Me to repent and return unto God. How regrettable that they should render themselves deserving of God's chastisement and eternal wrath![9] Bahá'u'lláh

After describing the tormenting Hell-Fire, in the course of a few short verses God gives us a "special sign" about that place of torment for the spirit:

Upon it [Hell-Fire] there are 19 [souls].
Only angels are at the head of the Hell-Fire.*
We made their number [19] a test for the deniers of Truth.
And [a means] for the sake of those who have received
a Book [Jews and Christians] and those who
have true faith [in their religion].
And so that [regarding the new Religion]
there be no doubt for those have received a Book
and for the believers [true Muslims]. Qur'án 74:30–31

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* The "angels of Heaven and Hell" are also mentioned in the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh has stated that the cup of immortality has been carried around by the hands of the angels of Heaven and Hell. Blessed is the soul that drinks of the cup of immortality, and leaves the mortal cup to those who desire it. (Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 3, p. 183)

In order to mislead the people, Muslim leaders have resorted and continue to resort to deceit. The following verse from Sura 14 Ibrahim concerns deceitful people over time, people who try, through deceit and trickery, to prevent the fulfillment of the promises of God. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn was chief among such deceitful people.

> They surely worked their deceit; and the punishment for their deceit is with God. Their plot was such as would demolish mountains. Do not think that God breaks His promise to His Messengers. God is the Powerful, the Almighty. It is the Day that the Earth will change into another Earth. Qur'án 14:46–48

> *Our enemies manifested such deceitfulness that Satan is astonished.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

A mystery hidden in 19

> And so [the choice of number 19 caused] those who have a sickness in their heart and those who deny [the Promised One] say: "What is God's purpose in this parable [the choice of number 19]? Qur'án 74:31

Explanation: In the above verse, number 19 has been called a "parable". What is the meaning of "parable"?—"example, something denoting something else, a lesson".

The above verse clearly shows that the number 19 is not haphazardly chosen; a mystery is hidden in this number that must awaken the generality of the believers, of whatever religion they may be—the people of the Book or Muslims. Why among thousands of numbers is this number selected? How could a number be the cause of assurance for a group of people and a way for testing another group? What is the importance of the number 19? The answer to these questions can be found in the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. From the beginning, the numbers 9 and 19 have played important parts in the Faith. For example:

- A Bahá'í year has 19 months.
- A Bahá'í month has 19 days.
- Every 19 days the Bahá'ís of every city or town must come together for worship, fellowship and consultation.
- Bahá'ís fast for a period of 19 days each year.
- The Bahá'í New Year begins on the evening of the 19th day of the 19th month.
- Every day, in addition to one obligatory prayer, Bahá'ís must repeat "Alláh'u'Abhá" (God is the Most Glorious) 95 times (5 × 19).
- It is recommended that the believers replace their home furnishings every 19 years (a symbol of detachment from worldly possessions).
- The Chosen followers of the Báb (the first to search for and recognize Him), along with the Báb Himself numbered 19.
- The number of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh was 19.[11]
- The period of time between the proclamation of the Báb in Shiraz, and the proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád was 19 solar years. (According to a hadith in *Biḥár al-Anwár*, the Era of the Qá'im is 19 years).[12]
- The Bahá'í Faith was manifested in the 19th century of the Christian era.

- There are 9 terraces above and below the terrace occupied by the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel—a total of 19 terraces.
- The Báb's foremost Book of Revelation, the Persian Bayan, is divided into 19 Chapters, each having 19 "units".
- Each year, Bahá'ís are asked, with complete personal freedom, to contribute 19% of their excess assets (after expenses) to be used for worldwide teaching and administration of the Faith, and for social and economic development by the head of the Faith.

The number 19 appears in different constructs in the Writings of the Báb; in the following utterance, He refers to three "kinds of 19":

> There are nineteen Names that lead to God .... And nineteen Letters of negation that are the nineteen gates of Hell, against the nineteen gates of Paradise ....* [13]

Can all these many connections of the number 19 to the history, teachings, laws and Writings of the Bahá'í Faith be a coincidence?

In addition to the Qur'án, one ḥadíth confirms the connection of the number 19 with the Bahá'í Faith:

> In the era of the Qá'im, the Cause of God shall revolve around the number of letters in "Bsm'lláh l-Rḥmán l-Rḥím" (In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate).[14]

The 19 consonants of the phrase Bismi'lláh ar-Raḥmán ar-Raḥím are:†

b	s	m	'	l	l	á	h	l	R	ḥ	m	á	n	l	r	ḥ	í	m
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

As we saw, the Qur'án considers the "number 19" (verse 74:30) to be a parable (verse 74:31), as a guidance to the righteous. However, according to this heavenly Book, people who take heed of this advice are rare:

> In this Qur'án, We placed every **parable** for the people; however, most of the people are deniers of Truth. Qur'án 17:89

> In this Qur'án, We provided every parable for the people; and if you brought a sign [verse] to them, those who are the deniers of Truth will say: "you do not speak except in vain [falsely]". Thus doth God place seals on the hearts of the ignorant. Be patient! God's promise is true. Qur'án 30:58–60

The verses of the Qur'án show that there is yet another mystery hidden in the number 19. We will learn of this mystery at the end of this chapter.

Let us continue with the study of the rest of Sura 74 al-Muddaththir:

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* Just as there are infinite degrees of human advancement and perfection, there are also infinite levels of the eternal Paradise:

In the shadow of each Gate of Heaven there hath been and will ever be infinite number of Gates. The Báb (the Persian Bayán, p. 82)

† When transcripted, the definite article (al-) is assimilated into sun letters (such as r—"ar-R") and loses its distinctive sound, but the letter used in Arabic is "l".

> Thus doth God mislead whosoever He desireth and guideth whosoever he will. Qur'án 74:31

Explanation: The above verse shows that the events being discussed are connected to the guidance and misleading of the people. Guiding to what path? The straight Path; Muslims are said to be on the straight Path. What other path is being discussed? The Path shown by a new Messenger.

Let us examine the rest of the verses of Sura 74 al-Muddaththir concerning the number 19:

> And no one knows the (number of) hosts of God except God. Qur'án 74:31

> And that is a reminder for the people. Qur'án 73:31

As we saw before, the number of angels is 19 (verse 30). The above verses inform us that only the Creator knows the number of angels. The number 19 is only a parable, i.e. it has an inner or spiritual meaning. The number is only a representation, an example, or a symbol of the number of the angels.

What is God's purpose in mentioning the number 19? What result can be attained from it? According to the next verse, the aim is to provoke curiosity among the deniers of Truth.

> So that [the choice of number 19 causes] those who have a sickness in their heart and those who are the deniers [of the Promised One] say: What does God intend by this parable [the choice of number 19]? Qur'án 74:31

The second part of the same verse teaches us the primary purpose of the use of the number 19.

> That is a reminder from Me for the people. Qur'án 74:31

> Nay! I swear by the moon, and when the night is asleep, and by the morning when it is awakened and radiant! Qur'án 74:32–34

> That [number] is just a great sign. Qur'án 74:35

> [This sign] is a warning to man; whoever desires let him go forward or stay back [search or ignore the sign]; every soul is to answer for his deeds. Qur'án 74:36–38

Afterwards, God describes the fate of the deniers of the new religion in the eternal world, in the form of a conversation between them and the believers:

> [A time will come when] the people of the right hand [believers in the new Religion] who are in Paradise, ask the sinners [deniers of the Truth]: What is the reason for your being in the Hell? Qur'án 74:39–42

> [The deniers] answer and say: We were not performing the obligatory prayer, were not feeding the poor, were busied with idle talk [rejected the news of the appearance of the Promised One], and were deniers of the Day of Religion, until the inevitable certainty came to us [we came to this world and became assured that "the Day of Religion" is a day that God bestows on people the new religion].* Qur'án 74:43–47

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* The "Day of Religion" has been used many times in reference to the time of the manifestation of the Bahá'í Faith. See chapters 19 & 20.

[In that world] intercessions will not benefit them. Qur'án 74:48

Being remote and fleeing from God's Religion

After the above conversation, God asks a question and then answers it:

> How was it [what was the problem] that they ignored Our reminder? [the reason was that instead of search and investigation of God's new Religion] they fled, even as donkeys [wild asses] who have seen a lion. Qur'án 74:49–51

The people's fear of facing God's religion, and their fleeing from the "Great Announcement" has also been prophesied in the Bible:

> Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? ... It will be as though a man did flee from a lion ... Amos 5:18–19

This intense fear of accepting the religion of God, and fleeing from the light of knowledge and salvation has been repeatedly mentioned in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

> *This is your Merciful Lord. To whom do ye flee?*[15] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In truth it is the foolish people who flee from Our presence.*[16] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The thing that must come hath come suddenly; behold how they flee from it!*[17] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Ears have been given you that they may hearken unto the mystery of Him Who is the Self-Dependent, and eyes that they may behold Him. Wherefore flee ye? The Incomparable Friend is manifest. He speaketh that wherein lieth salvation.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

> *They flee from the sanctified breezes of God, and are in contention and conflict with the Beauty of the everlasting glory.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

It is an ancient tradition for people to be in fear of investigating God's new Religion:

> Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Jesus (Luke 12:32)

> But the cowardly, the unbelievers ... their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Jesus (Rev 21:8)

> Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come" Isaiah 35:4

> Wait for the Lord; be strong, and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalms 27:14

The Báb tells us that to the extent that we hesitate in the recognition of the next Promised One—Bahá'u'lláh—to that same extent will we be afflicted with the fire of remoteness from God.[20] In the following utterance, God considers "caution" in recognizing and accepting the Promised One, one of the greatest sins:

> *Hesitancy is regarded in this Day, as among the greatest of sins.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

Let us continue with the study of the verses of Sura 74 *al-Muddaththir*:

> Every one of them is expecting to be given spread out pages. Qur'án 74:52

According to the above verse every one of the deniers desires a special miracle for himself; he wants a letter to descend from heaven especially for him. What is God's answer to such people?

> Never! [Such an expectation will not be fulfilled]. These people do not fear [the punishment of] the life to come. Qur'án 74:53

Explanation: The above verses refer to the lack of faith on the part of the deniers of the Promised One—people who do not fear the reckoning of the life to come. They want to recognize their Promised One through a miracle, i.e. the breaking of the laws of nature. God's miracle is His Word and the fulfillment of His glad-tidings. What miracle can be greater than so many holy verses, and the fulfillment of so many glad-tidings in the appearance of this Faith? If there be a trace of the fear of God in someone's heart, he could not ignore all these warnings, signs and reminders.

In all ages, people have asked the Messengers of God to manifest power and dominance over the laws of nature, thereby forcing them to profess their faith and become believers. Believing in God through miracles is a form of compulsion; such a profession of faith is invalid and without value in the sight of God. According to an utterance of Bahá'u'lláh, if God demonstrated by miracles His power to people, some would still be inclined to pretention and hypocrisy, feigning belief without the gift of faith in their hearts.[22]

The words, thoughts and actions of God's Messengers, all testify to their greatness and grandeur. Those who closely witnessed the life of the Báb, have written that they saw nothing but extraordinary habits and actions; nevertheless, God has never desired nor desires that miracles convince His servants to believe in Him and His Messengers. According to the testimony of Muḥammad-'Alí Zunúzí—known as Anís—the youth who was martyred with the Báb:

> But supernatural feats were so often observed of Him (the Báb) that no one, friend or foe, could deny them; a great number of people have observed numerous miracles performed by Him.[23]

Muḥammad-Big-i-Cháparchí, the chief of the twelve guards who were tasked by Mírzá Áqásí to transfer the Báb from Isfahan to the prison of Máh-Kú in the state of Ádhirbayján, has said:

> I swear by God that I witnessed naught but supernatural acts from that Master of Creation.[24]

Miracles prevent people from outwardly denying their faith in God. Does it transform their souls? Would unworthy people suddenly become true believers through witnessing miracles?

> *Even if they see all the signs, they will not be receptive to the Truth.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> And even if they see every sign they will not believe. Qur'án 6:25

Even if Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn and other clergy had witnessed a miracle performed by Bahá'u'lláh, they would not have been satisfied; each one of them wanted a miracle special to himself; for example, "spread out pages" descending from heaven regarding his own life. The "spread out pages" in verse 74:62 is a reference to verse 17:13; the same subject in these two verses demonstrates that way of God and people do not change. This subject has been discussed in detail in the books, ***Why Have We Come to This World?*** and ***Life with and without God***.

Let us now see, according to Sura 17 al-Isrá', what did people say and do at the time of the appearance of the Apostle of God, Muḥammad. Comparing the way of thinking of the people of that time with the way of thinking of the people of our time is instructive:

> We used every parable [reminder and sign] in this Qur'án [albeit it had no effect]; it only caused further denial on the part of the people. [Instead of learning from these examples,] the people say: We will never believe in you, unless you cause a spring to bubble out of the earth, or ... you reveal [for each of us] a book that we [can] read. Say: Sanctified be my Lord! Am I not but a Messenger [of God]? What prevents people from accepting God's guidance is that they say: Has God sent only a man as a Messenger? Qur'án 17:89–94

The above verses, which concern the denial of Muḥammad by the people of his time, include several matters (relating to the denial of the Promised One of our time) that have been repeated exactly in Sura 74 *al-Muddaththir*:

- Through "parables" (examples, reminders, signs) God introduces His Religion to us and proves its truth.
- The people ignore "parables" (signs, reminders); instead they demand miracles; an example is that they each want an open letter, especially for them, to descend from heaven.
- The people expect their Messenger be superhuman. In the verse that also relates to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, an exact reference has been made to this objection:

> Then he turned his face, became haughty and said: This is only the word of a man. Qur'án 74:23–24

God's way has been the same over all ages; God has appealed to the people's power of reason and intellect, not to their power of sight. The way of the people has always been the same: they have relied on their eyes, i.e. seeing miracles.

The responsibility of the Messengers is to remind and advise

The similarities between the thinking of the people of Arabia during the Age of Ignorance (pre-Islamic time of paganism) and the thinking of the people of our time—in this age when the supremacy of knowledge and science has stretched heavenwards—is astonishing. Sura 74 Muddaththir ends with the following three verses:

> No, never [God does not change His Way]; this is only a reminder [God only reminds the people]. Qur'án 74:54

> Then whosoever wishes [let him accept] His Dhikr [Remembrance]. Qur'án 74:55
>
> But no one will be reminded save that God desires; God is the one to fear, and God is the one to appeal to for forgiveness. Qur'án 74:56

Explanation: The above verses teach us that our Creator's way and tradition is only to remind and inform. God appeals only to our power of reason and conscience, and this is the way He informs us of His teachings. The compassionate God never compels us to profess belief.

We must accept the Promised One with gratitude and love, not with reluctance. "There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'án 2:256) is a witness to this fact, and clearly shows our relationship to God. God allows only the lovers and seekers of Truth to know His Promised One. He bars others from this great honor and eternal bounty.

During Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád, Mírzá Sa'íd Khán was Iran's Foreign Minister; this minister wrote a letter to Bahá'u'lláh warning Him to protect Himself from intrigues of enemies such as Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn; the response that Bahá'u'lláh dispatched to this minister is instructive:

They that yearn for the abode of the Beloved, they that circle round the sanctuary of the Desired One, are not apprehensive of trials and adversities, nor do they flee away from that which is ordained by God. They receive their portion from the ocean of resignation and drink their fill from the soft-flowing stream of His mercy. They would not surrender the good-pleasure of the Friend in exchange for the kingdom of both worlds, nor would they barter that which the Well-Beloved hath decreed in return for dominion over the realms of the infinite. They would eagerly drink the venom of woe as if it were the water of life, and would drain deadly poison to its bitter dregs just as a sweet and life-giving draught. In the arid wastes of desolation they are stirred with enthusiasm through the remembrance of the Friend, and in the dreary wilds of adversity they are eager and impatient to offer themselves as a sacrifice. Unhesitatingly have they renounced their lives and directed their steps towards the abode of the Best-Beloved. They have closed their eyes to the world and fixed their gaze upon the beauteous countenance of the Friend, cherishing no desire but the presence of the loved One and seeking no attainment save reunion with Him. They fly with the feathers of trust in God, and soar with the wings of adherence unto His Will. In their estimation a blood-shedding blade is more desirable than finest silk and a piercing dart more acceptable than mother's milk.

> *High-spirited souls by the myriad are deemed necessary in this path,*
> *To lay down a hundred lives with every fleeting breath.*

It behoveth us to kiss the hand of the would-be assassin and to set out, dancing, on our way to the habitation of the Friend. How indescribably pleasant is that hour, how immeasurably sweet that moment when the inmost spirit is intent upon sacrificing itself, when the tabernacle of fidelity is hastening to attain the heights of self-surrender! With necks laid bare, we yearn for the stroke of the ruthless

sword wielded by the hand of the Beloved. With breasts aglow with light, we eagerly await the dart of His decree. Contemptuous of name, we have detached ourselves from all else but Him; we shall not run away, we shall not endeavour to repel the stranger, we pray for calamity that thereby we may soar unto the sublime heights of the spirit, seek shelter beneath the shade of the tree of reunion,
[26] Bahá'u'lláh

19—a number hidden throughout the Qur'án

An Arab researcher, Dr Rashíd Khalífah, after great effort and search, concluded that the verses of the Qur'án possess a "mathematical order" established on the number 19. He wrote a number of books about his discoveries* and a translation of the Qur'án. Some of his discoveries are included in Appendix 2.

Rashíd Khalífah faced the intense opposition from many Muslims because of his insistence on the correctness of his views, and particularly his later claim to be a messenger of God but not a prophet. He was murdered in 1990. Muslims accused him of being a Bahá'í or of supporting Bahá'ís. In answer he told the accusers that they unknowingly have accused God of being a Bahá'í, since God revealed a Qur'án within which patterns of the number 19 can be found.†

After Rashíd Khalífah was murdered, other Muslims came forward and worked to amend and complete his discoveries. At this time, debate continues among two group of Muslims, those who agree with and those who oppose these discoveries. The supporting group considers the mathematical order of the Qur'án based on the number 19 a miraculous matter, a sign of the heavenly source of the Book, and strive to strengthen the faith of Muslims. Below is a brief sample of the views of a translator of the Qur'án into Persian, Ḥusayn-'Alí Kawtharí, written in defense of the importance of the mathematical order of the Qur'án based on the number 19; he has included his explanation in an appendix to his Persian translation of the Qur'án:

> One of the most important signs of the divine origin of the Qur'án (as alluded in 74:30–35) is the mathematical order of the Qur'án based on number 19. The first question that comes up is this: Why has the Exalted God made number 19 the base of the mathematical order of the Qur'án? For it is clear that no number has a special importance, and that there are no good or bad numbers. The Exalted God could have chosen any other number. So far, the best reason offered is that this number is the abjad sum of the letters of wáḥid ("one"), meaning an emphasis on the oneness, singleness and peerlessness of the Exalted God.[27]

Wáḥid ("One"): (wáw, 6) + (alif, 1) + (ḥá', 8) + (dál, 4) = 19

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* *Qur'án: Visual Presentation of the Miracle* (Islamic Productions, 1982). A selection of his findings are offered in Appendix 2 for those who love mathematics.

† We must realize that the value of God's Words and mysteries is not related to our interpretations or explanations. Is there anyone who is immune from error?

Ḥusayn-'Alí Kawtharí gives many reasons to prove his point. Only some of his statements concerning the disconnected letters in the Qur'án are mentioned in the present book:

> Take the disconnected letters. The sum of these letters in all the related sura is a factor of 19. In Sura 7, the sum of its disconnected letters (Alif, Lám, Mím, Ṣád) is 5,320 = 19 × 280. In Sura 13 the sum (Alif, Lám, Mím, Rá) is 1482 = 19 × 78. In Sura 14 (Alif, Lám, Rá) the sum is 1,197 = 19 × 63. In Sura 19 (Káf, Há', Yá', 'Ayn, Ṣád) the sum is 798 = 19 × 42, and so on. These facts regarding the disconnected letters is quite astonishing. The Exalted God, in many cases, after the disconnected letters, refers to the fact that these letters are the signs of His heavenly Book. However, this divisibility of these letters is not limited to this one aspect, and as was shown in the case of Alláh, these relationships are also multi-faceted. For example, the sum total of Abjad numbers of the disconnected letters in all the 29 Qur'anic sura that have disconnected letters is also a number divisible by 19: 101,726 = 19 × 5,354. Also, the sum of the sura numbers of the ones that have disconnected letters plus the number of disconnected letters at the beginning of the suras and the number of those verses: 931 = 19 × 49, etc.[28]

> These investigations are not yet complete. It does not even appear that we may be close to discovering all cases. But, in any case, with each discovery, the depth and wonderment of this hidden mathematics in the Qur'án increases. This is truly beyond imitation and beyond imagination.[29]

According to Bahá'u'lláh, many mysteries are recorded in the disconnected letters of the Qur'án by the Hand of God:

> In the disconnected letters of the Qur'án the mysteries of the divine Essence are enshrined ....[30] Bahá'u'lláh

The divine mysteries hidden in the nature of these letters are known only by God. We have only access to their appearance. For example, consider the "Ṭá' Sín" at the beginning of Sura 27 "The Ants". Is there a mystery hidden in the two letters Ṭá' and Sín? Their abjad values are 9 and 60 respectively.

The letter Sín equals the last two digits of the year of the Manifestation of the Báb (AH 1260); and the letter Tá' equals the number of years between the appearance of the two Promised Onesof our time—Bahá'u'lláh privately proclaimed His Cause 9 years after the declaration of the Báb. In addition, the abjad value of Tá' equals the value of BHÁ' (Bahá'):

(bá', 2) + (há', 5) + (alif, 1) + (hamza, 1) = 9

According to a ḥadíth:

> The Apostle of God said: Learn the interpretation of the Abjad, for in it are astonishing truths. Woe to a learned who does not know the Abjad interpretation.[31]

Another example of the disconnected letters of the Qur'án:

> Ṭá' Sín Mím: These are the signs of the Clear Book. Qur'án 26:1–2

Sura 26 has the ṭá' sín combination of Sura 27 plus a new letter, mím, which has an abjad value of 40. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh lasted forty years. Hence, four signs are hidden in ṭá' sín mím:

Sín (60): The last two digits of the year of the Manifestation of the Báb
Ṭá' (9): The number of years between the Manifestations of the two Promised Ones, and the same abjad as Bahá'.
Mím (40): The duration of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh

It is astonishing that three sura with these disconnected letters are followed by a similar verse:

Ṭá' Sín These are the signs of the Qur'án, the Clear Book. Qur'án 27:1

Ṭá' Sín Mím These are the signs of the Clear Book. Qur'án 26:1–2

Ṭá' Sín Mím These are the signs of the Clear Book. Qur'án 28:1–2

God teaches us in the sentence following the disconnected letters of these suras that the letters are the áyah of *al-Kitáb al-Mubín* ("the Clear Book"), meaning the Qur'án. The dictionary meaning of áyah is:

Symbol, sign, token, miracle, proof, and a verse of the Qur'án.

Additionally,, verse 27:2 states that the disconnected letters are *"a guidance and glad-tidings for the faithful."*

It is clear from verse 27:2 that an announcement is hidden in the disconnected letters, and a mystery which will guide the believers. What happier announcement is there than the appearance of two great Messengers for the guidance of humanity?

Sura 20 is called Ṭá' Há'. In the abjad values of the letters Ṭá' (9) and Há' (5) there is a connection to the Bahá'í Faith:

Abjad value of BHÁ'		Abjad value of Báb	
bá'	2		
há'	5	bá'	2
alif	1	alif	1
hamza	1	bá'	2
	9		5

The letter Ṭá' which leadeth to this Name. (Bahá')[32] Bahá'u'lláh

It is possible that Ṭá' Há' also alludes to Ṭihrán, the place of birth and Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh.*

Addressing Ṭihrán:

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* Bahá'u'lláh "declared His Cause" twice: once in Ṭihrán, to a few followers of the Báb who were in prison of Síyáh-Chál with Him; the second time, in the Garden of Riḍván, Baghdád, to those present and to all the people of the world.

Rejoice with great joy, for God hath made thee "the Dayspring of His light", inasmuch as within thee was born the Manifestation of His Glory.[33] Bahá'u'lláh

The role of reasoning and reflection

Why has the Qur'án been called the "Clear Book" in the above verses?* It is because, throughout that Book the signs and tokens of the Manifestation of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are as clear as the sun. In what heavenly scripture can we find announcements so clearly repeated concerning another religion? God continually calls on us to reflect and reason:

Will ye not reason? Qur'án 23:80

Will ye not open your eyes (perceive)? Qur'án 32:27

God has created knowledge and reason as the balance for understanding. We must not suspend or delay such a power which is the gift of God. We must weigh all matters in this balance; for it is the mind that comprehends religious truth. Should man be deprived of reason, how can he understand religion? It is, therefore, clear and evident that reason and knowledge are needed.[34] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Have you ever thought why you have accepted Islám or any other religion?

If you believe in Moses, write down the reason you came to believe in that Messenger.

If you believe in Zoroaster, write down the reason for your belief in Him.

If you believe in Jesus, write down the reason for your belief in Him.

If you believe in Muḥammad write down the reason for your belief in Him.

Picking up a pen and writing encourages us to think, and prevents us from floating around on the clouds of idle fancies and vain imaginings, bringing us back to the world of reality. Why does Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly remind us of this point?

Should anyone deny this Cause and remain oblivious to the truth of this Most Great Revelation, he will never be able to demonstate the truth any Cause.[35]

How strange! Notwithstanding these explicit and manifest references these people have shunned the Truth.[36]

A religious leader who claimed to be karím, athím and 'azíz

During the time of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, another religious leader stepped onto the stage of history, who had very similar characteristics to Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn. It is fitting to also remember him in this chapter. His name was Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Karím Khán and he was a native of Kirmán. Like Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, he sought fame and status. He opened a religious school, calling himself the "Fourth Pillar". Apart from his great wealth; it has been said that he had 40 children; but, even then, he was not satisfied and demanded more honor

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* al-Kitáb al-Mubín ("the clear or perspicuous book") is an expression used in verses 5:15, 6:59, 11:6, 12:1, 26:2, 27:1, 28:2, 34:3, 37:117, 43:2 and 44:2. Verses 12:2, 27:1, 28:2, 43:3 and 44:2 state that this expression refers to the Qur'án.

and power. To satisfy his desires, he arose to oppose the two Promised Ones of our time, and penned many papers opposing them. The two Promised Ones warned him, many times, to cease his enmity to the Cause of God; but those warnings were of no avail.

The Qur'an—that repository of every "wet and dry thing [everything on the land and in the sea]" (6:59)—has not forgotten this leader. Before visiting Qur'anic references regarding him, it is good to remind ourselves that the descriptions of Heaven and Hell in the heavenly scriptures have symbolic meanings, and should not be interpreted as physical places. The verses related to the fate of this leader in the eternal world of God are of these kinds of verses; they are an indication of the wrath of God toward this turban-headed selfish one who misled many believers.

> **Verily, the tree of "Zaqqúm" shall be the food of the Athím** [sinful]. [A food that] like molten metal or boiling water boils in the hearts. Seize him and cast him into the depths of Hell; then pour boiling water over him and say: **Taste** [O sinner, the bitter boiling food] **this, for thou forsooth art the mighty** ['azíz] **Karím** [generous]! This punishment is because of your doubts and misgivings. Qur'án 44:43-51

It is clear that these verses are about a particular person who has committed a great sin. Can any sin greater than the enmity of a powerful religious leader towards the Promised One of God be imagined? "Bitter food" or "molten metal" is an indication of the wrath of God toward this haughty and selfish man who, instead of spreading knowledge, understanding and faith, becomes the cause of misleading the people.

A literal reading of these verses describing this leader,as "mighty and generous" would be a contradiction that would astonishe any reflective individual. The description "mighty and generous" is solely assigned to God as the Creator of the universe. How could such attributes be exclusively allocated to God and used to praise and honoring Him—"Mightyand Generous"—be used to describe the sinful? What connection do these words have to a man without a conscience?

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh removes the veil from this mystery and solves the puzzle. The Qur'án uses three words to describe this leader:

athím ("sinner")—karím ("generous")—'azíz ("mighty")

Ḥájí Mírzá Karím Khán was accustomed to using the words athím and karím when referring to himself in his writings:

> The "Sinner" servant, Karím the son of Ibrahim thus says ....

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh solves the puzzle connected to this religious leader with the following sentence:

> *This man, moreover, feigning humility, hath in his own book referred to himself as the "athím servant": "Athím" in the Book of God, mighty among the common herd,* "Karím" in name![37]*

In the Qur'án many mysteries are hidden. The mystery of the puzzle that had astonished the scholars and interpreters for centuries has, by the Will of God, been disclosed in our time, by the pen of our two Promised Ones. Whose condition and state were prophesied in the Qur'án? A person whose:

- name, according to his father's choice, was Karím ("Generous")
- spirit, by his own admission, was Athím ("Sinful")
- being, among his followers, was 'Azíz ("Powerful, Mighty")

Karím Khán referred to belief in the Báb as "pure apostasy" and he considered the Báb's followers "infidels who must be murdered".[38] He writes:

> [They] are the enemies of God and the Apostle of God, peace be upon Him ... and the destroyer of the nation and the government, and corrupter of the people and the cities.[39]

Karím Khán then issues a Fatwá that the heads of religion and government must:

> Strive to eradicate them and not allow them freedom; and with the support of the religion of Islám, wipe out the enemies of the religion from the face of the earth.[40]

The murder of over 20,000 followers of this Faith, in the cruelest, most gruesome, and tragic way, and the eradication of hundreds of thousands of others in Iran was because of the fatwas issued by powerful religious leaders.

Rarely in the Qur'án can we find verses referring so clearly to a particular person, as those relating to these two religious leaders:

Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn-i-Ṭihráni	O ye who have wrapped thyself (in the garb of clergy)! ... Honor thy Lord .... And eschew evil deeds. Qur'án 74:1-5
Karím Khán-i-Kirmáni	(O Sinner) Taste this [the bitter food] for thou art 'Azíz (mighty) Karim [generous]! Qur'án 44:49

The Báb has also confirmed the connection between the verses of the Qur'án and Karím Khán:

> *The Truth hath appeared and the Cause of God hath been manifested. This is the Day of God. It is a judgement unto the deniers. The Last Hour hath come; the Moon*

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* An'ám ("common herd", plural of na'am) is a reference to Karím Khán's most famous book *Irshádu'l-'Awám* ("Guidance for the Common People"). He wrote this book for the "Common people", and especially for women. 'Awám is pejorative; because in Persian it is often used in the form 'Awám-Kal-An'ám ("common people like common herd"). In using this word, Karím Khán has expressed his view about people, especially his followers. The use of An'ám by Bahá'u'lláh is likely a subtle reference to the view of this haughty leader towards his followers who considered him mighty, and their savior.

Historians have written that Karím Khán was intensely addicted to tobacco; the sign related to him (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 190), i.e. "bitter tree", is revealed in verse 43 of Sura 44 ad-Dukhán ("The Smoke").

> *hath been cleft, and the verses revealed, and those who turn away say: This is continual witchcraft .... Say: Taste ye the torment for your unbelief! This is the bitter tree .... We promised the sinner (Athím); painful torment, poisons, a scalding draught, and the fire of Hell is his portion. God's promise hath been fulfilled. Then taste this, O thou who art, indeed, the mighty Karím!*[41]

Karím Khán's notorious book *Irshádu'l-'Awám* ("Guidance for the Common People"), begins:

> Thus saith the servant, sinful (Athím) Karím the son of Ibrahim that when I saw ... the common people are deprived of understanding of them (his other books) .... And some pleaded ... that I write a book for them ... with proofs that every one of the common people ... could understand ... I consulted the Book (or bidding beads, at random in order to decide). After receiving permission ... I began to write this book ....[42]

In *Irshádu'l-'Awám,* Karím Khán claims knowledge of various sciences. Bahá'u'lláh states that his purpose for this claim was pride that arose from a deep-rooted ignorance of his need to cleanse his heart from all he has learned, and then return to God.[43]

Karím Khán is also mentioned in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:

> *Call ye to mind Karím, and how, when We summoned him unto God, he waxed disdainful, prompted by his own desires; yet We had sent him that which was a solace to the eye of proof in the world of being and the fulfilment of God's testimony to all the denizens of earth and heaven. As a token of the grace of Him Who is the All-Possessing, the Most High, We bade him embrace the Truth. But he turned away until, as an act of justice from God, angels of wrath laid hold upon him. Unto this We truly were a witness.*[44] Bahá'u'lláh

Mírzá Taqí Khán and Qurbán Khán

When Bahá'u'lláh was a youth, before His "Proclamation", He was present at a gathering with Mírzá Taqí Khán, the prime minister of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh.* In a derisive way, Mírzá Taqí Khán asked for the meaning of the Qur'anic statement: "There is no wet or dry thing ... that is not (recorded) in the clear Book". Bahá'u'lláh responded, "There is no doubt therein." Taqí Khán asked "What does it mean?" Bahá'u'lláh said: "It means that in the Qur'án there is mention of everything, from historical facts, commentary, meanings, detailed history, promises and warnings." Taqí Khán asked "Am I also mentioned?" Bahá'u'lláh answered: "You are also mentioned." Again, Taqí Khán asked "By allusion or explicitly?" Bahá'u'lláh responded "Explicitly". He said "I did not see anything about myself."[45]

In response to Taqí Khán, Bahá'u'lláh quoted the following verse of the Qur'án:

> I take refuge from thee, in God, if you be "taqí" [meaning God-fearing, virtuous]. Qur'án 19:18

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* According to an oral statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Taqí Khán became angry, then he asked "Is there anything about my father **Qurbán Khán**?" Bahá'u'lláh replied, "There is." He asked, "Explicitly or in allusion?" Bahá'u'lláh said "Explicitly", then he related the following verse of the Qur'án:

> They said: God has a covenant with us that we accept no Prophet, except if he brings a "qurbán"* [(sacrifice] that fire [from heaven] burns. Qur'án 3:183

It is not clear what happened after this conversation; it is likely that Taqí Khán, after hearing these fresh and swift answers, became so uneasy, annoyed and even ashamed that he preferred to remain silent.

Taqí means God-fearing, pious, virtuous, and chaste. Sura 114 an-Nás ("Mankind") shows that we should take refuge in God from Satan (*I take refuge with the Lord of men ... from the tempter ...*). (Qur'án 114:1–4)

Iranians praised Mírzá Taqí Khán because of his reforms and called him Amír-Kabír† (the Great Chief); but they are not aware of his cruelty; most people do not want their hero's name to be stained. He was the one who twice issued an order to murder the Báb.

In addition, the fate of two followers of the Báb, by itself, makes clear the inner nature of Mírzá Taqí Khán. During his ministry, a follower of the Báb was condemned to death because of his beliefs. One of his friends who was close to the court, appealed to Taqí Khán to intervene and prevent this crime. Taqí Khán ordered the man be brought to him; after meeting him, he asked the Bábí to deny "'Alí-Muḥammad, the Báb". The devout believer answered and said: "Which do you want me to deny, 'Alí or Muḥammad?" Taqí Khán became very angry and ordered that his throat be cut! The executioner did so. One of the Báb's uncles who was a beloved merchant of Shíráz, also suffered martyrdom by the order of Taqí Khán. According to a verse of the Qur'án, the killing of even one person is like the killing of all humanity:

> Whoever murders one man ... it is as though he has murdered all mankind. Qur'án 5:32

What is the meaning of jinn and satan?

The Bahá'í Faith has had, and still has, many enemies. Among the earliest of them were two comrades and collaborators named Mírzá Yaḥyá (a younger step-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, known as Azal) and Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Iṣfahání who lived during the time of Bahá'u'lláh. The Qur'án alludes to these two also. To learn about the verses related to them we first need to become acquainted

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* Qurbán—an animal that is sacrificed, such as a cow or sheep. In this verse, qurbán is accompanied by "fire" (a symbol of Hell-fire); among hundreds of miracles that the people demanded, the choice of such a miracle, i.e. the burning of an animal with fire from heaven, is astonishing. Is it possible that for the sake of this event and this conversation such a special miracle was chosen?

† Alexander was also titled "the Great", the one who was instrumental in the deaths of thousands of innocent people, and the burning of the most beautiful and splendid palaces, the Hakhámanishí (Achaemenids) dynasty palaces, in Persepolis, Iran.

with two words, "***Jinn***" and "***Ins***". The use of these two words has been one of the great mysteries of the Qur'án, especially jinn, which over the course of centuries and ages has been the subject of curiosity and search. Let us see what is meant by **jinn** and note how it differs from **ins**. The primary meaning of jinn is "concealment". It is believed that jinns are intelligent beings who are hidden from our eyes. In a letter, 'Abdu'l-Bahá unveiled the meaning of this mysterious word:

> "Jinn" in the Qur'anic verse refers to people whose faith or denial is veiled and concealed. Jinn is a hidden being . That is why it is said: They see you in a way that you do not see them; that is, they are aware of your faith and certitude, but their faith and certitude is hidden from you.[46]

In what way could common people be considered **jinn**? Some people, for reasons known only to themselves, continually try to hide their inner self from others; if you ask them a question, they will reluctantly give a short answer; you would think they are afraid of sharing their inner self. Such people are often plagued by doubts and misgivings, and are unable to scale new heights of faith and certitude. This is because courage, frankness, truthfulness and transparency, together with knowledge and wisdom are essential for faith and certitude. The word jinn has been used to refer to such concealers. **According to the Qur'án, the nature of jinn is completely different from that of man.** (Qur'án 55:14–15).

The Báb defines a jinn as follows:

> *Jinn is one in whom the fire of denial is hidden.*[47]

Shaytán ("Satan") refers to those who are deceitful, "quiet whisperers" and Concealers:

> Whispering* is the work of Satan. Qur'án 58:10

Satan and his supporters see the simple-mindedness in people; but the simple-hearted people are unaware of the deceit hidden in the heart of Satan and his supporters.

> He and his clan see you while you do not see them. Qur'án 7:27

Some people have two faces; in appearance they are human, and their inner self is jinn:

> *Some possess two faces.*[48] Bahá'u'lláh

Why are some people inclined to concealment and others to transparency?

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* Najwá ("secret conversation") in this verse alludes to those who use quiet and few words as a tool for concealing their inner self, and carrying out their sinister and odious plots. Those who work as spies have an abundance of such skills; the secret of their success is in saying little and concealing. A mirror is the best symbol of transparency and honesty; it reflects everything, whether ugly or beautiful. We should learn honesty and transparency from the mirror.

> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so it may be seen plainly what he has done has been done through God.
> Christ, Gospel of John 3:20–21

Ins ("human") refers to those with a transparent nature; they have reached different degrees and levels of faith or may even be irreligious; their common traits are frankness and harmony between their outer and inner self; they call a friend a friend, and an enemy an enemy.

Our humanity is dependent on our transparency; the more transparent we are, the higher the level of humanity that we display; the more sincerity we possess, the more human we are. The closer we come to hypocrisy, deceit and dissimulation, the farther we are from "humanity", and the closer we get to "being a jinn". According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

> *Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues.*[49]

Can any structure be raised without a foundation?

> *Equity is the most fundamental among human virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it.*[50]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Observe equity in your judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station.*[51]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Could we adhere to "justice" without being truthful?

Therefore, those who lack truthfulness are not human beings. The word "human" is applicable only to those who, at the very least, possess truthfulness. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Qur'án emphasizes the attribute "falsehood". For example, the deniers of the Promised One are called "liars":

> I swear by the successive Messengers [two Promised Ones of our time) .... Whatever has been promised to you will be fulfilled .... The time for the appearance of those Messengers shall come .... **Woe to people who, on that Day, engage in falsehood!**
> Qur'án 77:1, 7, 11, 15

In the glorious Qur'án, God repeatedly raises this question to awaken us: "Can a greater injustice be imagined than imputing falsehood to God?"

> Then who is more unjust than the one who imputes falsehood to God, one who, when truth comes to him, considers it false? Is not Hell the habitation of the deniers? Those who are truthful and accept the truth, are of the righteous; whatever they desire, they find with their Lord. This is the reward of the virtuous people.
> Qur'án 39:32–34

How is the denial of the Promised One related to falsehood? The easiest and most common form of lying is lying to oneself, not to others; we cannot deny God's Promised One except in this way; according to a proverb "no one can better deceive us than ourselves".

The image of jinn in the Qur'án is often negative (34:41)* and can refer to ignorant and foolish people who consider themselves among the believers, but are insincere in their belief. Satan can be used to refer to deceitful religious leaders who misuse the faith of ignorant people to achieve their own selfish aims. In the sight of God, "blasphemy" is preferable to "deceit":

Be thou of the people of the hellfire,
but be not a hypocrite.
Be thou an unbeliever,
but be not a plotter.
Make thy home in taverns,
but tread not the path
of the mischief-maker ....[52] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever man-made adversity and calamity perpetrated in the name of religion, has been and will continue to be the result of collusion among these two groups—satans and jinns. Whenever these two groups become partners and collaborators, their power multiplies a hundredfold. Religious leaders lacking a conscience, use their ignorant and foolish followers as weapons to achieve their aims. Those who, using bombs, tear apart themselves and innocent people are evidences of these words. Sura 114 an-Nás is wholly related to these two groups of people.

In Sura 1 al-Fátiḥa, which has seven verses, God teaches us that in order to find the straight Path we must raise our suppliant hands and pray to God in servitude; in Sura 114 an-Nás, which has six verses, God instructs us to take refuge in Him from the mischief of deceitful people; inasmuch as obtaining the gift of faith, and preserving it, is possible only with the help of, and through the grace and mercy of, God.

We must not limit ourselves to a literal understanding of jinn and Satan; these words refer to attributes that more or less exist in most people. However, anyone in whom the degree of concealment, dishonesty and deceit exceeds a measure—known only to God—step out of the bounds of being human in the sight of God. The entity known as Satan was originally one of the jinns; then, through deceitfulness and rebellion against God, he reached the rank of Satan. (Qur'án 18:50)

At the time of the appearance of all the Messengers, humans, "jinns" and "satans", all arise in opposition to the chosen Ones of God:

> Thus We allowed for every Prophet enemies, satans, humans and jinns, to appear and induce deception and false words to the people. If God did not desire, they would not be able to do so. Leave them to their own falsehood. Qur'án 6:112

> *Whenever the Call of God was raised, the call of Satan was also raised; inasmuch as darkness desireth to oppose light; injustice desireth to oppose justice; ignorance desireth to oppose knowledge.*[53] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly refers to the appearance, in our time, of Satan:

> *The Call of the All-Merciful hath been raised, and behind it the call of Satan.*[54] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The evil ones have been and are lying in wait, and resort to every deceit and cunning.*[55] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The evil ones have been and are lying in wait, and in the name of God, the True One, have misled and continue to mislead the people.*[56] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: The Evil One hath appeared in such wise as the eye of creation hath never beheld. He Who is the Beauty of the All-Merciful hath likewise been made manifest with an adorning the like of which hath never been witnessed in the past.*[57] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Should anyone deter thee from the path of the All-Merciful, know then verily that he is the Evil One, though he may appear in the form of a human being.*[58] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the one true God, deliver yourselves from the darkness that surroundeth you.*[59] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In every Dispensation the majority of the people were, through the temptations of the Evil One, deprived of recognizing the Manifestation of the All-Merciful, and for the sake of a mortal life were deprived of an eternal imperishable life.*[60] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In these days, Satan is calling in the name of the All-Merciful, the Sámirí hath raised his voice through the mention of the Eternal, and the Evil One is busied in spreading infinite falsehood.*[61] Bahá'u'lláh

Most of the problems that occur in the name of religion in the world are caused by humans in the form of "satans" and "jinns". These pretenders to faith have been and continue to be the internal enemies of religions of God. In the Bahá'í Faith, these hypocrites and liars are called "Covenant Breakers"; inasmuch as they break (violate) their commitment of loyalty to the Covenant of God. During the past ages, these liars, pretenders and hypocrites have been the cause of many divisions and sects in the religion of God.

Two colluding and obstinate enemies of the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith has also had its share of human-like "satans" and "jinns". However, by the Will of God, they have been prevented from executing their sinister schemes. The most well-known among them is Mírzá Yaḥyá. The holy Qur'án, that repository of treasures and mysteries refers, many times, to this ambitious man and his deceitful partner, Siyyid Muḥammad. Before we examine these verses, it is necessary to be aware of a few facts:

- Mírzá Yaḥyá was a half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh who was a recipient of great favor and bounty from both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied and was intensely jealous of that Promised One, and like Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, he sought greater position and power.
- In the end, through the instigation of the deceitful Siyyid Muḥammad, he arose in opposition to Bahá'u'lláh and declared himself the Promised One of the age.

- Mírzá Yaḥyá was greatly fearful of threats to his life, and would often, with a great skill, hide his identity.

Let us now see what the Qur'án announces about Mírzá Yaḥyá and his deceitful inciter and assistant:

> Give them the news of the one to whom We presented Our verses, but he ignored them; then Satan followed him and he was misled. Qur'án 7:175

The above verse shows that the story is about someone who directly dealt with God's verses. From the start many verses from the two Promised Ones of our time were addressed to Mírzá Yaḥyá, although he chose to ignore the advice given to him. Mírzá Yaḥyá was appointed the token leader* of the followers of the Báb. Nevertheless, from the beginning he sought leadership and power, but could not accomplish this on his own. To achieve his aims, he needed an encourager and inciter to embolden him, to give him hope, and also to scheme for him. Meanwhile a man appeared who embodied all that Yaḥyá needed.

Satan has no physical existence but represents the evil promptings of the selfish ego. He has a number of skills. For example:

- Concealment
- Mastery of deceit and tricks
- Temptation in the soul of shortsighted and credulous people

Siyyid Muḥammad Iṣfahání possessed all these skills to perfection, and used them with great skill in aiding and collaborating with Mírzá Yaḥyá. If it had not been for Siyyid Muḥammad's temptations, Mírzá Yaḥyá may not have made any claims. The collusion of these two partners, like the mixture of two deadly poisons, increased their toxicity a hundredfold. In this case, Mírzá Yaḥyá assumed the role of a jinn and Siyyid Muḥammad played the part of a satan. With mutual help, these two manifested these two roles, on the world stage, in the most perfect way.

For instance, at Siyyid Muḥammad's instigation, Mírzá Yaḥyá executed several plots to murder Bahá'u'lláh—none succeeded:

> *He who for months and years, I reared with the hand of loving-kindness hath risen to take My life.*[62] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Whatever Siyyid Muḥammad suggested to him* [Yaḥyá], *he puteth down and placeth upon it the seal of His Holiness* [the Báb].[63] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Evil One who hath seduced him; ... and all for love of leadership, leveled so great a number of calumnies against the True One!*[64] Bahá'u'lláh

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* 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated Mírzá Yahyá's appointment as token leader of the Bábís was a stratagem that Bahá'u'lláh, His brother Mírzá Músá, and Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karím Qazvíní, one of the Báb's secretaries, devised, with the Báb's approval, to divert attention onto a little-known figurehead and away from Bahá'u'lláh, "though He was known and seen." *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 37.

> If it be Our desire, We could raise his station through these verses; but he tended towards the worldly life and followed his idle fancies; he can be likened to a dog that lolls its tongue, whether you attack him or ignore him. Qur'án 7:176

We studied part of the above verse in chapter 10. In the Kitáb-i-Badí', Bahá'u'lláh confirms the connection of this verse to Azal:

> *Thou art the one who hath been mentioned in these terms in the former Book, exalted be His words: Even as a dog who lolleth out his tongue, whether you attack him or ignore him.*[65] Bahá'u'lláh

The above verse is the exact description of the condition of Mírzá Yaḥyá; he followed his idle fancies and vain desires; he was intensely inclined toward worldly power and comfort, and was not worthy of the favor and loving kindness given to him; no matter how hard others tried to awaken him, it was of no avail; he continued with his sinister actions until the end of his life, and in the end, left this world hopeless, without any friends or supporters.

The second part of the previous verse and the two next verses of Sura 7 al-A'ráf, show us that the Announcement of the Qur'án concerns guidance and faith. These verses counsel us to learn from the fate of these two friends and accomplices:

> This is the example of the people who considered Our verses false; teach them then these stories, perchance they may reflect. Qur'án 7:176

> Evil as an example are the people who deny Our verses and do themselves injustice. Qur'án 7:177

> Whomsoever God guides is guided, and whosoever is misled is of the lost.* Qur'án 7:178

Sura 22 *al-Ḥajj* ("Pilgrimage") also raises the case of someone who, without divine guidance or heavenly scriptures, misleads people:

> Among the people is he who without knowledge or guidance or a clear book contends regarding [the Cause of] God; he considers himself important so he can cause people to deviate from God's Path, In this world he is destined to have infamy [disgrace] and abasement; and on the Day of Resurrection, the torment of Fire. This is the punishment for what your hands have wrought; and God does not do injustice to His servants. Qur'án 22:8–10

The above verses are also a description of the conditions of Mírzá Yaḥyá:

- He was deprived of the gift of God's knowledge and guidance, and had no holy book.
- Even so, he considered himself important and made a claim of Prophethood.
- He misled a group of people.
- By the end of his life, he was abased and died in disgrace.

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* To be misguided or to walk the straight Path, both are in God's hands. However, according to God's measure of justice, which is known to none, faith and denial are both related to the merit and worth of a person. God is always the supporter of deserving people, and the hindrance to undeserving ones.

In the following utterance Bahá'u'lláh states that in "claim and pretention" he was greater than any great one, but in action he was inferior to any insignificant one:

> *In claim and pretention greater than any great one, and in acton and practice lesser than any insignificant one.*[66] Bahá'u'lláh

Verse 22:8 tell us of a person who does not have a heavenly Book; this is an evidence that the person has made a claim of Prophethood; since only the Prophets are able to produce such a Book; the phrase "thy hands" (22:10) is evidence that the verses are related to a particular person.

Several verses later, the sura suddenly speaks of two persons who arise to oppose God. In the previous verses the intended person is introduced as one who "contends with God"; in the following verses, two persons (Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad) are introduced as the "two in enmity with God":

> These are two enemies who disputed about their Lord. Those who deny God will wear the garment of Fire .... Qur'án 22:19

Regarding Mírzá Yaḥyá, Bahá'u'lláh states that "in these days, he arose to all sinfulness"; then, He informs us of the wretched fate of Mírzá Yaḥyá and his inciter in the hereafter:

> *By reason of this, We cast them away and abandoned them to the torment of Hell.*[67] Bahá'u'lláh

> *One who is at war with God, ye have taken as your Lord.*[68] Bahá'u'lláh

> *He* (Azal) *said: I am your exalted Lord!*[69] Bahá'u'lláh

In Sura 114 *an-Nás*, there is mention of a person who induces evil suggestions in the hearts of people, be they jinn or human. The following verses apply to all the enemies of the Religion of God, in particular Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad:

> Say! I take refuge in the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind, from the mischief of the Evil One who puts temptation in the hearts of people, jinn and man. Qur'án 114:1–6

The following two statements from the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh apply to Mírzá Yaḥyá:

> *O Remembrance of God! Say: Protect yourselves from the mischief of the Evil One, who puts temptation in the hearts of the people.*[70] The Báb

> *Protect yourself from the temptations of the Evil One, who leadeth the people astray.*[71] Bahá'u'lláh

The theme of Sura 113 *al-Falaq* ("The Dawn") is very similar to that of Sura 114 *an-Nás*, the difference being that it refers to envy:

> I take refuge in the Lord of the Dawn ... from the evil deeds of the envious one as he envies. Qur'án 113:1, 5

Perhaps envy was the most important motive behind Mírzá Yaḥyá's sinister plots against Bahá'u'lláh.

> *Even if the whole of creation desired to measure the extent of his envy and enmity, it would be unable to do so.*[72] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In these days, however, such odours of jealousy are diffused, that ... from the beginning of the foundation of the world ... until the present day, such malice, envy, and hate have in no wise appeared, nor will they ever be witnessed in the future.*[73] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In all of creation, a soul so in love with leadership and rank hath never been seen.*[74] Bahá'u'lláh

Mírzá Yaḥyá reached the station of an angel but later fell to the rank of a satan. The story of Iblís (Satan) is the description of Mírzá Yaḥyá's condition and his end.*

> And when We said to the angels: Bow down to the Man; they all bowed down except Iblís who was a jinn; he turned away from the command of God. Will you take him and his children as your friends instead of Me, while they are your enemies? What a replacement do the oppressors choose! Qur'án 18:50

All the signs described in the above verse have been fulfilled by Mírzá Yaḥyá:

- Among the followers of the Báb, Mírzá Yaḥyá was the only "angel" who did not express servitude to Bahá'u'lláh.
- Outwardly, he reached the state of angels, but he assumed the role of satan and was accounted among the jinns.
- He turned away from the command of God.
- A number of the followers of the Báb, instead of accepting the second Promised One (Bahá'u'lláh), considered Azal their friend and even their God.

> *The one whom the unbelievers chose as God for themselves.*[75] Bahá'u'lláh

What a great error those followers committed, and what a terrible substitute for the Promised One of God did they choose!

> *We then commanded the angels to bow down before Adam, the Báb; all the angels bowed down .... Except the Evil One; he turned away from Our command and waxed arrogant.*[76] The Báb

Here the Báb has equated Himself with Adam; in some divine verses, Adam and Insán ("Man") have both been used to refer to the Messengers of God. The true followers of the Báb were all angels; Mírzá Yaḥyá, through his arrogance

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* In the following utterance Bahá'u'lláh likens Mírzá Yaḥyá to Satan:

> He considered himself the essence of detachment, as did Satan. And he said: I have turned my face towards God, the Lord of the worlds. Therefore, I did not bow down before Adam in the past, and will never bow down. For were I to bow down before anyone but God I would, then, be numbered among the infidels.
>
> Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 358-359. (prov. tr.)

and denial of Bahá'u'lláh, became a symbol of Iblís (Satan). In reference to Mírzá Yaḥyá, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *In every heaven Satan hath been known by a name, and hath been the teacher of the kingdom ... And then, of a sudden, he hath become accursed.*[77] Bahá'u'lláh

> Satan won dominance over them, and caused them to forget the Remembrance of God; they are the party of Satan. Indeed they are the losers. Qur'án 58:19

In the following utterance Bahá'u'lláh refers to the followers of Mírzá Yaḥyá as the "party of Satan":

> *He hath withdrawn from the "party of the All-Merciful", and hath turned his face towards the "party of Satan".*[78]

For many years, Bahá'u'lláh engaged in the training and education of Mírzá Yaḥyá, making a human out of him. Bahá'u'lláh also gave him a reputation and a station, but he did not appreciate Bahá'u'lláh's efforts—he wanted more. In the end he arose in opposition to the Promised One of God, and did all he could to usurp the station of the Promised One; he even schemed the murder of some of the believers. The deplorable story of Mírzá Yaḥyá can be found in the following utterance:

> *By God! We took a lump of clay and kneaded it with the water of Our command, formed it into a human being, and adorned it with the robe of names amongst the people of the world. Then he rose up in rebellion, and waged war against My Self, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.*[79] Bahá'u'lláh

The following utterance of Jesus is appropriate for this situation:

> The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
>
> As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. Matthew 13:37–43

This world is a place of tests. Some people choose the part of jinns and satans, others the role of angels and lovers of God. How blessed are people who, in this mortal life, amass eternal wealth, those who recognize the value of being human, and the role of this world in their eternal destiny! These acquire the high station and rank destined for them.

> *Should man manifest human virtues, he would exceed the rank of an angel. Without them he will sink lower than an animal.*[80] Bahá'u'lláh

> *How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached!*[81] Bahá'u'lláh

Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct.[82]
Bahá'u'lláh

In this chapter we have discussed the sad story of five stubborn enemies of the two Promised Ones of our time. These enemies caused many simple-hearted people to be misled. Religious leaders have an exalted station in the sight of God if they be engaged in guidance and support of the people. However, if they mislead people severe punishment awaits them.

In His prayers, Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly prays for the salvation and guidance of the sinful:

O Lord! Aid Thou the heedless to acknowledge what Thou hast manifested through Thy might. Assist those who have turned away to set their faces towards the door of Thy mercy, and those who have denied Thee to believe in Thy Oneness and Thy singleness. O Lord! Assist them to return unto Thee and to arise to make amends, through the radiance of the light of the Day-Star of Thy manifestation ....[83]
Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O my God, O my God! Praise be unto Thee for having revealed Thy verses and manifested Thy proofs. Thou hast illumined the hearts of Thy favored ones with the light of Thy knowledge, and the faces of the sincere ones with the radiance of Thine utterance. I beseech Thee by the ocean of Thy grace and the heaven of Thy generosity, and by what hath been treasured in Thy knowledge ... To aid them that have turned away to return unto Thee, and those who have denied Thee to profess their faith, and the wayward to return unto the court of Thy mercy, and to repent at the door of Thy forgiveness.

Thou art, verily, the Forgiving, The All-Bounteous, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.[84]
Bahá'u'lláh

In the following utterance, the forgiving and gracious God, through the beautiful and gentle Words of His Manifestation, and with the utmost kindness and beneficence, counsels Karím Khán, that great embodiment of error, and admonishes him not to boast of his knowledge, and be warned by the transient nature of this quickly passing life:

This world is quickly passing, and they that seek it find it unfaithful. Put not your reliance on the mortal world. Meditate upon its changes and revolutions. Where are to be found those who built the castles of old, and where are the ones who desired to rise to high stations? How many the palaces wherein the founder rested at night, and in the morn were possessed by another! And how numerous the dwellings where boisterous laughter was raised in the night season, followed by the voice of lamentation at daybreak. Where is to be found a mighty one that was not abased, and affairs that were not reversed? Where is a soul that did not depart, or the oppressor that drank the cup of salvation?

Boast not of earthly knowledge. Above every possessor of knowledge is one who is more learned. Know thou that for every sharp edge there is dullness; for every joy a sadness, for every mighty one an abasement, and for every learned one a stumbling. Follow the way of righteousness, and enter the school of God's knowledge. Fear God and God shall instruct you. Sanctify thy heart from the allusions of the people, that it may be illumined with the radiance of the Names and Attributes of God. Close thine eyes to remoteness, and open thy sight to justice.[85]
Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh invited Karím Khán to turn to God and, using the following prayer, to ask for forgiveness and the bounty of rejoining the circle of the faithful and the sincere:

> *Praise be unto Thee, O my God! I am he who hath failed in his duty towards Thee, and protested against what Thou hast revealed, hath followed his own selfish desires and vain imaginings, and hath been neglectful of Thine exalted and glorious Remembrance.*
>
> *O God! Hold not against me my misdeeds; purify me from rebelliousness; send down upon me from the court of Thy grace the sweet savors of Thy forgiveness. Destine for me the seat of truth by Thy side, and join me with Thy sincere servants.*
>
> *O my God and my Beloved! Deprive me not of the breezes of Thine exalted Words and the breaths of Thy glorious Garment. Cause me, then, to be satisfied with whatsoever Thou hast revealed and destined.*
>
> *Thou, verily doest as Thou pleasest. Thou art, verily the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous, the All-Bountiful, the All-Merciful.*[86] Bahá'u'lláh

Jesus Christ has said that we would know every tree by its fruits (Matthew 7:16). In order to comprehend the degree of Bahá'u'lláh's grace and kindness, we only need to consider His treatment of His brother Mírzá Yaḥyá.

Has such a degree of love and forgiveness ever been shown in the past? A man expresses limitless affection towards His brother, exerts great efforts to train and educate him, and makes every sacrifice for His brother's comfort and success. Despite all His efforts, that brother eventually rises up in utmost enmity, envy, hate and discord against such a compassionate and loving brother. He inflicts every cruelty towards Him, plots, many times, to murder Him, and executes a number of those plots. For example, he poisons Him to the brink of death in such a way that the loving brother suffers until the end of His earthly life from the effects of the poison. Despite everything He does, that wronged brother forgives his brother who has no conscience, makes every effort to rescue him, and showers him with affection and kindness. Has, from the beginning of time, anything like this ever occurred?

> *I swear by God, O My brother! There is no spite in My heart for thee, nor for anyone in the whole of creation. Hear My words, then! Purify thy soul and be not of the heedless.*[87] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh stated that even for Mírzá Yaḥyá—that embodiment of infinite transgressions—the path of salvation was yet open, provided he repented:

> *Though he is burdened by sins greater than the weight of the heavens and the earth, even so – inasmuch as the oceans of grace billow in this Day -- should he repent and return, God will, through His mercy that surpasseth the whole of creation, forgive him.*[88] Bahá'u'lláh

In the exquisite utterance below, Bahá'u'lláh asks God to sacrifice Him for the sins of the sinful:

May my soul be a sacrifice to the trespasses of them that trespass against Thee, for upon such trespasses are wafted the sweet savors of the tender mercies of Thy Name, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. May my life be laid down for the transgressions of such as transgress against Thee, for through them the breath of Thy grace and the fragrance of Thy loving-kindness are made known and diffused amongst men. May my inmost being be offered up for the sins of them that have sinned against Thee, for it is as a result of such sins that the Day Star of Thy manifold favors revealeth itself above the horizon of Thy bounty, and the clouds of Thy never-failing providence rain down their gifts upon the realities of all created things.[89]

Bahá'u'lláh, that Light of the majesty and glory of God, treated all with kindness and love, even His enemies:

I swear by His holy Essence! Were all the peoples of the world to present themselves before His court, the glances of His loving-kindness would be directed towards all, and all would be attired with the mantle of His favour.[90]

We have never gloried in any thing, nor did We seek preference over any soul. To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. In the company of the poor We have sought their fellowship, and amidst the exalted and learned We have been submissive and resigned.[91]

It is befitting to end this chapter with a few verses from the Qur'án describing the circumstances of any denying "sinner" or any other oppressor—such as Karím Khán or Mírzá Yaḥyá. These verses of Sura 45 *al-Játhiya*, which are quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, are addressed to all people, in particular to the Muslims of our time:

Such are the verses of God: with truth do We recite them to Thee. But in what revelation will they believe, if they reject God and His verses? Woe to every lying sinner, who heareth the verses of God recited to him, and then, as though he heard them not, persisteth in proud disdain! Apprise him of a painful punishment. And when he becometh acquainted with any of Our verses he turneth them to ridicule. There is a shameful punishment for them!

Qur'án 45:5–8 (quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 206–7)

To manifest enmity toward the religion of God is the clearest proof of free will, and also a demonstration of man's ungratefulness. Yet, without being aware of it, such enemies have played and continue to play a prodigious part in the spread of the Religion of God.

Were it not the Will of God, exalted be His glory, none would have had the power to transgress against Him. All are held within the grasp of His might, and are feeble and abject when faced with the manifestations of His strenght.[92] Bahá'u'lláh

The people of the world have grievously erred, for they fondly imagine that they can exterminate the Cause of God, that they would be able to extinguish His effulgent light. ... I swear by the righteousness of God that the more they endeavour to quench its Light, the brighter will it shine .... Every created thing is impotant before the evidences of His invincible might.[93] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Adversity is the oil which feedeth the flame of this Lamp and by which its light is increased, did ye but know. Indeed, the repudiation of the froward serveth but to

proclaim this Faith and to spread the Cause of God and His Revelation throughout the world.[94] Bahá'u'lláh

The grace of your Lord embraces all the people, but most are ungrateful and do not express thankfulness. Qur'án 27:73

What a great bounty did God bestow upon the people of Persia. And yet they failed to appreciate it![95] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

1 Unknown source. (prov. tr.)
2 God Passes By, pp. 143–144.
3 God Passes By, p. 141.
4 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 339. (prov. tr.)
5 Some Answered Questions, 2nd edition p. 35.
6 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 133. (prov. tr.)
7 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 271. (prov. tr.)
8 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 339. (prov. tr.)
9 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 235. (prov. tr.)
10 Asráru'l-Áthár, letter "Alif", p. 18. (prov. tr.)
11 "The Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh (the Pillars of the Faith)", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. III, 1928–1930, p. 81.
12 Ishráq-Khávarí, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd – Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 3, p. 1213.
13 The Persian Bayan, p. 82. (prov. tr.)
14 Faízí, Muḥammad-'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 243.
15 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 155. (prov. tr.)
16 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 40.
17 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 43 (no. XVIII)
18 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 58 (gr. 3.4)
19 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 167. (prov. tr.)
20 Áyát-i--Bayyinát, p. 166.
21 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 229. (prov. tr.)
22 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 80.
23 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 34. (prov. tr.)
24 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 40. (prov. tr.)
25 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 80. (prov. tr.)
26 Compilation Fire and Light, #VI
27 Qur'án-i-Majíd, with Persian tr. Ḥusayn-'Alí Kawtharí, printed by Páján, pp. 86–87.
28 Qur'án-i-Majíd, with Persian tr. Ḥusayn-'Ali Kawtharí, printed by Páján, p. 88.
29 Qur'án-i-Majíd, with Persian tr. Ḥusayn-'Ali Kawtharí, printed by Páján, p. 90.
30 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 202.
31 Imálí, Shaykh Ṣaddúq, translated by Kumre'í, p. 317 (quoted in Bisháárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, p. 123)
32 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 271. (prov. tr.)
33 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 53–54 (gr. 92)
34 Khatábát-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 227. (prov. tr.)
35 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 246. (prov. tr.)
36 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 254.
37 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 190.
38 Irán-Námih, no. 1, year 27, p. 40.
39 Irán-Námih, no. 1, year 27, p. 40.
40 Irán-Námih, no. 1, year 27, p. 40.
41 Ishráq-Khávarí, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd. Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 1, pp. 42–43. (prov. tr.)

42 Ishráq-Khavari, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd. Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 1, p. 61.
43 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 211.
44 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 81 (gr. 170)
45 Asráru'l-Áthár, Ḥurúf-i-Alif-thi pp. 164–165.
46 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 2, pp. 34–35. (prov. tr.)
47 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh Bi Iftikhár-i-Bahá'íán-i-Pársí, p. 90. (prov. tr.)
48 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 170. (prov. tr.)
49 Cited in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 22.
50 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 203 (no. C)
51 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 204 (no. C)
52 Compilation Trustworthiness: A Cardinal Bahá'í Virtue #38
53 Khatábát-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 186. (prov. tr.)
54 The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 53 (Súriy-i-Haykal, gr. 99)
55 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 62. (prov. tr.)
56 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 178. (prov. tr.)
57 The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 53.
58 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 19. (prov. tr.)
59 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168 (no. LXXXV)
60 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 64. (prov. tr.)
61 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 337–338. (prov. tr.)
62 Cited in God Passes By, p. 169.
63 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 99. (prov. tr.)
64 Majmú'e'iy Az Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, pp. 260–261. (prov. tr.)
65 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 321. (prov. tr.)
66 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 263. (prov. tr.)
67 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 203. (prov. tr.)
68 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 363. (prov. tr.)
69 Unknown Source
70 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 71. (prov. tr.)
71 Asráru'l-Áthár, Ḥarf-i-Alif p. 276. (prov. tr.)
72 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 150. (prov. tr.)
73 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 249.
74 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 149. (prov. tr.)
75 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 280. (prov. tr.)
76 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 71. (prov. tr.)
77 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 335. (prov. tr.)
78 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 280. (prov. tr.)
79 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 200. (prov. tr.)
80 Payám-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 35. (prov. tr.)
81 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 206 (no. CI)
82 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 172.
83 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 4. (prov. tr.)
84 Ishráqát va Chand-Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 107. (prov. tr.)
85 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 74–75. (prov. tr.)
86 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 73. (prov. tr.)
87 CANNOT BE FOUND
88 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 410. (prov. tr.)
89 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 310–311 (no. CXLII)
90 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 160. (prov. tr.)
91 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 249–250.
92 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 350. (prov. tr.)
93 Compilation Fire and Light, I. From the Wrintings of Bahá'u'lláh #X

94 The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 147 (Suriy-i-Ra'ís, gr. 14)
95 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 5, p. 46. (prov. tr.) (this vol. is not online)

Part 6

The Promise of the Appearance of God

This part contains three chapters:

13. **The Promise of the coming of the Promised One in the name of God**
14. **The Great Day of God**
15. **Bahá'u'lláh, the Light, Glory and Grandeur of God**

The Beginning of all utterance is the praise of God.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Anyone who hopes to meet God [must be patient]; its appointed time will come. Qur'án 29:5

O my Lord! O Thou peerless and incomparable God! I testify to Thy oneness, and to the fact Thou hast never had, nor will ever have, any partner or helper.[2] Bahá'u'lláh

O Thou Generous and Compassionate God! I bear witness to Thy Unity and to Thy Oneness; and that Thou hast never had, nor will ever have, any peer or likeness.[3] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 67 (grid 4.1)
2 Ad'iyyih-Ḥaḍrat-i-Maḥbúb, pp. 377–378. (prov. tr.)
3 Ad'iyyih-Ḥaḍrat-i-Maḥbúb, p. 334. (prov. tr.)

13
The Promise of the coming of the Promised One in the name of God

The Praise of God in the Writings of the Two Promised Ones of Our Time

The primary purpose and the goal of creation is the knowledge and love of God:

> *Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He,..... chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation ....*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

One way to know those Who are the Manifestations of the names and attributes of God is through Their relationship to Their Creator:

> He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. John 7:18

None of the former Messengers of God have praised their Creator as much as the two Messengers of our time have done; it is impossible to describe how eloquently They have spoken of the glory and grandeur of God. To express utter servitude to His Creator, Bahá'u'lláh has referred to Himself with only the word Bahá', not Bahá'u'lláh ("The Glory of God"). On every page of the Tablets revealed by the two Messengers of our time, Writings which exceed one hundred volumes, the praise of God shines as clear as the sun.

This chapter is itself another proof of the truth of this Faith:

> *All praise be to God, the Pure and Omnipotent Lord, He Who is the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting. Utter nothingness hath come into being through His Being, and every existence hath appeared through His Existence.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

> *No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence. Sanctified is He above the understanding of the wise; exalted is He above the knowledge of the knowing!*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

> *No one hath ever been able befittingly to recognize Him nor will any man succeed at any time in comprehending Him as is truly meet and seemly, ...*[4] The Báb

> *My God, Thou Whom I adore and worship, Who art Most Powerful! I testify that no description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

Every man of insight hath testified to Thy Oneness. Thou art the Almighty One through Whose bounty all existence hath come into being, the wrong-doing of Whose servants hath never hindered Him from showing forth His favour.[6]
Bahá'u'lláh

He is exalted above every mention or praise and is sanctified beyond every word of commendation or every comparison.[7]
The Báb

My God, O Thou Who art the All-Sufficient, the Most Generous, the Most Merciful, my King, and my Lord! All are Thy servants, and through a Word proceeding from Thee they have all come into being out of utter nothingness; they all testify to their poverty and to Thy wealth, to their ignorance and to Thy knowledge, to their weakness, and to Thy strength, to their powerlessness and to Thy might.[8]Bahá'u'lláh

O Thou Eternal God! Thou knowest and art my witness that this Servant, at all times and under all conditions, hath sought naught but Thy good-pleasure, and if it be Thy Will, through Thy loving-kindness, He shall seek naught else .... How can this Servant's words be worthy of acceptance by Thee, or his utterance mentioned in Thy Presence? How can utter nothingness upraise the standard of existence ...?[9]
Bahá'u'lláh

The Ancient of Days, in His Essence, is above all knowledge and description. ....[10]

The eternal Being is exalted above all mention or likeness. That which appeareth in creation is the manifestation of the Primal Will of God in its revelation, yet not in its Essence. He is the Manifestation of the Will; in Him naught can be seen but God, exalted be His glory, the Eternal Beloved. Whatsoever is with Him is with God.*[11]
The Báb

Praise be to the all-perceiving, the ever-abiding Lord Who, from a dewdrop out of the ocean of His grace, hath reared the firmament of existence, adorned it with the stars of knowledge, ... He it is who knoweth and bestoweth all. He it is who transcendeth all that hath been said or heard.[12]
Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou Who art the Beloved of my soul and the Fountain of my life! I am persuaded of my powerlessness to describe and extol Thee in a manner that becometh the greatness of Thy glory and the excellence of Thy majesty.[13]
Bahá'u'lláh

The following shows how eloquently Bahá'u'lláh praises the majesty and greatness of God:

How can mine eye, which hath no faculty to perceive itself, claim to have discerned Thine Essence, and how can mine heart, already powerless to apprehend the significance of its own potentialities, pretend to have comprehended Thy nature? How can I claim to have known Thee, when the entire creation is bewildered by Thy mystery, and how can I confess not to have known Thee, when, lo, the whole universe proclaimeth Thy Presence and testifieth to Thy truth?[14]

The Báb, in many of His Writings, praises God and expresses His servitude and evanescence towards His Creator, in a way that is astonishing. In a prayer, that youthful Promised One, in Whose Being "the Great Spirit of God" is shining and radiant as the sun and Who is sinless, asks God for forgiveness, even considering His existence in the Presence of God as a sin.

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* The Primal Will, the Holy Spirit of God, the Source of creation.

Messenger's role in relationship between God and His Servants

In the Bahá'í Writings God has been likened to the sun and His Messengers to mirrors. This comparison clearly shows the relationship between God and His chosen Ones. If the image of the sun in the mirror states: "there is no sun but me", this is not an error, as the sun is the speaker here; and if the image says: "I am not the sun"; this is also correct and true; inasmuch as there is a great difference between the sun and the mirror.

> *We recognize in the manifestation of each one of them, whether outwardly or inwardly, the manifestation of none but God Himself, if ye be of those that comprehend. Every one of them is a mirror of God, reflecting naught else but His Self, His Beauty, His Might and Glory, if ye will understand.*[15] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Naught can be seen in Him except God, exalted and glorifies be He; He is the First .... and He is the Last.*[16] The Báb

> *These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest.*
>
> *These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others.*[17] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Thou art He Who hath made my desire to be the same as Thy desire, and my will the same as Thy will.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the Messengers of God have three stations:

- The physical (material) station; we have this station in common with them.
- The station of the rational soul; again we share this station with them.
- The station of Divinity, which is special to the Manifestations.[19]

In the special station of manifesting the Divine in the Mirror of Their Being, the Messengers have two ranks:

- The rank of Oneness or "essential unity"
- The rank of "separation and distinction"

> *Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness ... the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness ... have been and are applicable to those Essences of being ....*
>
> *Viewed in the light of their second station—the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations ...—they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh quotes the following ḥadíth regarding the first station:

> *"Manifold and mysterious is My relationship with God. I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am that I am, and He is that He is."*[21]

The following utterance of Bahá'u'lláh clearly expresses the relationship between the Manifestations and Their Creator:

When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things "verily I am God"; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay![22] Bahá'u'lláh

The Manifestations have nothing in Their Self but the Light of God. To deny these chosen Ones, is to deny God.

... but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me. Jesus, Luke 10:16

The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself.[23] Bahá'u'lláh

In one aspect, the world of being is a mirror and a sign of the existence of God.

Every created thing that hath walked in the ways of God exclaimeth: "Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me"! And it is manifestly clear that these words and this station pertain not to the essence of that being; nay, rather, it is because that being hath entered beneath the shadow of the True One, and is thus accounted of Him.[24] Bahá'u'lláh

All the Manifestations spring from the same Source. The "Holy Spirit of God" or the "Primal Will" is radiant in Them all. The differences between them is in the intensity of radiance. The radiance of this Light is of maximum intensity in this age.

In the following utterance, the Báb instructs us about the unity of all the Messengers of God. He likens God to the sun, and the Messengers to "mirrors" facing the same sun; the light that radiates from all the Messengers is called the "Primal Will":

See no Creator save God .... Naught is reflected in all the Mirrors except one Sun; and that Reality is the Primal Will.[25] The Báb

The eternal Being remaineth in the same condition from eternity even unto eternity, while revelation and concealment are attributes of His Primal Will.[26] The Báb

Any reality to which the term "being" is applicable hath been created through the Primal Will of God, and He hath brought the Primal Will into being through His Own Self.[27] The Báb

He hath created the Primal Will, just as He hath created all things through Its Self. He hath created It through His Own Self, and all others through It, and hath associated It with His Own Self .... It hath been and will continue to be the same Will that is manifested in every dispensaton.[28] The Báb

In the following statement, the Báb teaches us that the meaning of the "Presence of God" is the Presence of the "Primal Will":

By attaining unto the Presence of God is meant attainment unto the presence of the Primal Will.[29] The Báb

The following verses of the Qur'án clarifies the relationship between God and His Messengers:

> Those who deny God and His Messengers, and who desire to distinguish between God and His Messengers .... Are truly of the infidels, and We have prepared for such unbelievers a humiliating torment. Qur'án 4:150–151

What is the meaning of "distinguishing between God and His Messengers"? If we consider the apparent meaning of these words, we could say that the Apostle of God has also made a claim of being God. But what is the purpose of this verse? It is the unity between God and that Messenger, and in reality, all the Messengers. Christ has also made a similar statement:

> I and the Father are one. John 10:30

Most Christians understand the above statement to mean that the Person of Christ was the same as the Self of God.* Although,one cannot distinguish between the sun and its image in the mirror, nevertheless, the difference is very great. Yet, just as a pure and perfect mirror reflects the light of the sun perfectly, so the Messengers—having surrendered their will to the Will of God—perfectly reflect God's Will.

Were all the Manifestations of God to make claims of Divinity, they would be justified; inasmuch as there is no disparity between God and His Manifestations; it is the same one true God Who speaks through His Messengers. If the followers of all religions comprehended and accepted this truth, they would realize that by accepting the new Faith of God, they only change the name of their Faith not the Faith itself. In the Qur'án that eternal Faith is called Islám. As long as this world lasts, the same one Religion of God appears, at various intervals, on the world scene, with a new Name.

Hence, according to the Bahá'í Writings, the station of Muḥammad is even more exalted than that the Muslims have imagined. Muslims view the Apostle of God as a human who received Revelation. This point of view is based on the following verse:

> I am but a man like you; I only receive Revelation. Qur'án 18:109

Muslims consider the importance of Muḥammad is in His being the "Seal of the Prophets". However, the station bestowed by Bahá'u'lláh upon Muḥammad is much more exalted than that station; Muḥammad is the perfect Mirror reflecting the light of God; all God's Names and attributed are perfectly manifested in Him. Compare the following titles that Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb have used to describe Muḥammad with the title "Seal of the Prophets" and see the difference:

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* To ascribe Godhead to a human is common among Christians; most, whether Catholic of Protestant, believe that Christ was God Who came to earth and was crucified. The Qur'án strongly rejects this belief. This author has written an extensive chapter refuting this common misunderstanding. Refer to *Muḥammad: the Spirit Who Glorified Jesus,* and the chapter, *Is Jesus God or a Messenger of God?*

Titles given to Muḥammad in the Bahá'í Writings

The Peerless Beauty	The Essence of Loving-kindness
The Lord of all Creation	The Sun of the horizon of Oneness
The Lord of Messengers	The Prince of the First and the Last
The Sun of Prophethood	The Mine of Divine Knowledge
The Everlasting Beauty	The Manifestation of the King of Glory
The Primal Will	The Educator of the People and the Kindred of the Earth
The Prince of the World	The Prince of Messengers
The eternal King	The King of the chosen Ones
The divine Beauty	The Pride of the Messengers
The divine Luminary	The Mine of Divine Wisdom

[30]

Each succeeding religion confirms the former religions; this is the primary meaning of the "Seal of the Prophets". The Bahá'í Faith also places the "seal" of confirmation on all the religions of God, and explains and elaborates their teachings. In His American travels, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about Muḥammad , the Apostle of God, in churches and Jewish temples, and refuted many of the misunderstandings of the people of the world, in particular the Westerners. Note the following from one of His talks in the great Jewish Temple in San Francisco (Temple Emmanuel-El, 12 October 1912):

> *Consider that Muḥammad was born among the savage and barbarous tribes of Arabia, lived among them and was outwardly illiterate and uninformed of the Holy Books of God. The Arabian people were in the utmost ignorance and barbarism. They buried their infant daughters alive, considering this to be an evidence of a valorous and lofty nature. They lived in bondage and serfdom under the Persian and Roman governments and were scattered throughout the desert, engaged in continual strife and bloodshed. When the light of Muḥammad dawned, the darkness of ignorance was dispelled from the deserts of Arabia. In a short period of time those barbarous peoples attained a superlative degree of civilization which, with Baghdád as its center, extended as far westward as Spain and afterward influenced the greater part of Europe. What proof of Prophethood could be greater than this, unless we close our eyes to justice and remain obstinately opposed to reason?** [31]

From the beginning of the Bahá'í Faith, some enemies of the Faith have propagated claims that Bahá'u'lláh said He was God:

> *Some of them say: 'He hath laid claim to divinity'; others say: 'He hath devised a lie against God'; still others say: 'He is come to foment sedition'. Base and wretched are they. Lo! They are, in truth, enslaved to idle imaginings.*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh gave an early response to these enemies in the Kitáb-i-Badí':

> *If the word "divinity" hath everflowed from My pen, I have intended naught but His divinity in relation to the world....*[33] Bahá'u'lláh

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* Since the appearance of Islám, Christian priests have written many books and treatises denouncing Islám. This author has written an extensive book responding to these denunciations: *Muḥammad: The Spirit Who Glorified Jesus.*

O people! My purpose hath not been to glorify Mine Own Self, but rather God Himself, if ye be of them that judge fairly. Whatever I impart unto you is by the Will of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great.[34] Bahá'u'lláh

Certain ones among you have said: "He it is Who hath laid claim to be God." By God! This is a gross calumny. I am but a servant of God Who hath believed in Him and in His signs, and in His Prophets and in His angels. My tongue, and My heart, and My inner and My outer being testify that there is no God but Him, that all others have been created by His behest, and been fashioned through the operation of His Will.[35] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb had prophesied that the "Promised One of the Bayán", i.e. Bahá'u'lláh, will speak the following on behalf of God:

... as the Mouthpiece of God, the Source of His divine light—exalted and glorified be He—[He] *proclaimeth: 'Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me; in truth all others except Me are My creatures.*[36] The Báb

Then again, the Báb states that someone, in a letter, asked Bahá'u'lláh a question, and that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the following answer on behalf of God—not on His own behalf:

Verily, verily, I am God; no God is there but Me. I have called into being all the created things, I have raised up divine Messengers in the past and have sent down Books unto Them. Take heed not to worship anyone but God, He Who is My Lord and your Lord.[37] The Báb

In the above utterance, the Báb delicately reminds us that God is the God of the Promised One as well as our God.

In the following utterance the Báb clarifies the relationship between Bahá'u'lláh and His Creator:

He hath never had, nor will He have, any motion or stillness except by the Will of God, exalted and glorified be He .[38] The Báb

Despite all these explanations and clarifications, the enemies of the Faith have not ceased their calumnies, and continue to write the same accusation in their books. Those who rise up in opposition and objection, finding faults with this Faith, are in reality its proclaimers:

Indeed, the repudiation of the froward serveth but to proclaim this Faith and to spread the Cause of God and His Revelation throughout the world.[39] Bahá'u'lláh

Appearance of the Promised One, in the name of God

Know, that indeed the "promise" of God is true; albeit most people are unaware [of that promise]. Qur'án 10:55

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of "attaining unto the Presence of God" and of His recognition ....[40] Bahá'u'lláh

Even as His exalted Essence acteth as the Manifestation of Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all ... in like manner, His Words are the manifestation of the Divinity and Lordship of God.[41] The Báb

What promise is it that God testifies to its fulfillment? What promise is it that most people are unaware of it? One of the mysteries of the Qur'án and other heavenly Books is that they have mentioned a Promised One named "God", and have given the glad-tidings that the day of the "Presence" shall come, and the people shall attain and be honored by "Meeting God":

> Whoever hopes to Meet God, should know, of a certainly, that its time shall come. Qur'án 29:5

> He [God] will direct the Cause [*Amr*] and explain the verses, perchance you may be assured of [the promise of] meeting God. Qur'án 13:2

> *The one true God is My witness! Nothing more exalted or more explicit than "attainment unto the divine Presence" hath been revealed in the Qur'án.*[42] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verse indicates that those who strive and search will have the honor of Meeting God:

> O Man! Thou hast striven in the path [of the Presence] of thy Lord [God], and [for this] thou shalt attain His Presence. Qur'án 84:6

Before the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith, no one understood this mysterious promise—Meeting God. The appearance of God in human form was the cause of great bewilderment and wonder for the scholars, and puzzled them with the following question: How could the Creator of earth and heaven suddenly take the nature and form of a man? Such a thing is never possible, inasmuch as, according to the testimony of the Qur'án:

> No visiom taketh in Him... Qur'án 6:103

Even great Prophet Moses could not bear to see God:

> He said: My Lord! Reveal your Self to me, so I can see you. God answered: You shall never see Me. Qur'án 7:143

Meaning of the appearance and the presence of God

> Indeed the explanation [of the Qur'án] is with Us. Qur'án 75:19

According to the Will and Wisdom of the Almighty God, the hidden mystery, this priceless pearl and bewildering puzzle was concealed from humanity, in the shell of ambiguity, until in our era the veil of mystery was removed from it:

> *Attainment unto the presence of the Ancient of Days is impossible. What hath been intended in the Qur'án by the "Presence of God", is the presence of that Reality which God hath associated with His Own Presence.*[43] The Báb

> *The attainment of the presence of the Ancient of Days in the world of existence is impossible; what is intended, in the Qur'án, by the "Presence of God" is attainment unto the presence of the Tree of Divine Reality* [God's Messenger].[44] The Báb

Like pure and radiant mirrors, the Messengers are the Manifestations of the attributes of God; they manifest His glory and majesty to us, according to our capacity to perceive. Hence the appearance of God means the appearance of His

Messengers; and the "Presence of God" means the presence of God's Messengers in a human temple:

> *It hath been demonstrated and definitely established, through clear evidences, that by "Resurrection" is meant the rise of the Manifestation of God to proclaim His Cause, and by "attainment unto the divine Presence" is meant attainment unto the Presence of His Beauty in the person of His Manifestation.*[45] Bahá'u'lláh

> *By Presence, therefore, is meant the Presence of the One Who is His Vicegerent amongst men.*[46] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Person of the Manifestation hath ever been the representative and mouthpiece of God.*[47] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Attainment unto the Divine Presence can be realized solely by attaining His presence. Through His potency everything that hath, from time immemorial, been veiled and hidden, is now revealed.*[48] Bahá'u'lláh

Whenever the Manifestations express "being God", their purpose is the expression of pure non-existence; they die to the self and live in God. In such a condition, the speaker is God, not the Messenger of God:

> *Say! This is the Self of God that hath, in truth, mounted His Throne.*[49] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In truth, the Remembrance is the Lord, but all are veiled from Him. He is the One Who hath appeared and risen with the Cause of His Lord while the whole of mankind is heedless.*[50] The Báb

In the following utterances, God addresses us through the Person of the Báb:

> *O ye that circle the Throne of Glory! Hearken unto My Call which hath been raised by the Person of the Báb: "Verily, I am God and there is none other God but Me ....*[51] The Báb

> *This station is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement. This is the station in which I have no control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life nor over my resurrection.*[52] Bahá'u'lláh

> *For they* [the Manifestations] *have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain ... in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly effaced and non-existent ... and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy. For the slightest whispering of self, within such a Court, is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence.*[53] Bahá'u'lláh

The Messengers are merely the bringers of God's Message; God is the "Player of the Instrument", God is the "Singer".

In the following verse from the Psalms of David and the New Testament, the "appearance of God" is made completely clear:

> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Psalms 118:26

> For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' Matt 23:39

Fulfillment of the Promise of meeting God

In the following invitation, Bahá'u'lláh not only announces the "Day of being in the Presence of God" and the "appearance of God", He also teaches us the conditions of this "meeting":

> *This is the Day to behold the Face of the Beloved! For He Who is the Almighty hath appeared unveiled and is now manifest. Hasten ye with pure hearts, that perchance ye may attain His Presence and gain true knowledge of that which is worthy of your station .... Beholding His Face and attainment of an abiding felicity is possible through three means: a heart that is pure, eyes that are sanctified, and ears that are cleansed from whatever they have heard aforetime.*[54] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Day is calling, the Sun announces and the Moon gives the joyful tidings: O friends! The All-Knowing God is come! Bear ye witness; the hidden Light is manifest, hasten ye, with heart and soul, towards Him.*[55] Bahá'u'lláh

> Hear my voice, when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me .... Teach me your way, O LORD, lead me in a straight path .... I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalms 27:7–14

> *O lovers of His beauty! Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court ....*
>
> *Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favor; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth. Lift up the veil that obscureth your vision, and dispel the darkness with which it is enveloped, that ye may gaze on the naked beauty of the Beloved's face, may behold that which no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear hath heard.*[56] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O ye dwellers in the land of God! The Incomparable Friend standeth before you, unveiled .... While there is yet time, engage in the mention of the Ever-Abiding, and set your faces towards the Celestial Countenance.*[57] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Well is it with him whose eyes are soloaced, in this Day, by beholding the Face of God.*[58] Bahá'u'lláh

The Manifestations are the "Face" of God among the people; they manifest to us the glory and greatness of God:

> *I am Countenance of God Whose splendor can never be obscured.*[59] The Báb

> *All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.*[60] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb states that no action is more important for a seeker of Truth than to consider, with fairness, the verses of the Bayán, in order to clearly see the Truth and be not deprived of the Presence of the Manifestation Whose Presence is identical to the Presence of God, and His good-pleasure is the good-pleasure of God; inasmuch as all have been created for this purpose; and that their glory is in this that they attain the fruit of their existence, which is the attainment onto the Divine Presence and belief in His Verses.[61]

God has made it incumbent upon us to proclaim this "Great Announcement" and this "Greatest Name" to all nations:

> *It behoveth you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations. Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: 'The Lord is come in His great glory!'?*[62] Bahá'u'lláh

The joyful tidings of the "appearance of God and Presence of God" did not begin with the advent of Islám; according to the Qur'án, the people of Israel were also honored with such an announcement:

> We, then, gave Moses a Book ... perchance they [the Children of Israel] can be assured of meeting their God. Qur'án 6:154

The glad-tidings of the coming of God has also been given in the holy Books of the Jews and Christians:

> In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9

> Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. Zechariah 14:5

> For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' Matthew 23:39

In the Bayán, the Báb confirms the glad-tidings of former Manifestations:

> *Naught can be seen in Him but God.*[63] The Báb

> *He, verily, is the Mirror of Divinity and the Sun of Lordship.*[64] The Báb

> *Whosoever attaineth the Presence of Him Whom God shall make manifest, hath attained the Divine Presence, and hath verily attained unto the Presence of God Himself, if he believeth in Him.*[65] The Báb

The Báb has also specified the time of the "Advent":

> *In the year nine ye will attain unto the Presence of God.*[66] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His Cause in the dreadful "Black Pit" prison in Tehran, nine years after the manifestation of the Báb.

In the following verse of the Qur'án, which is considered one of the "verses of the Presence" or "Meeting", many mysteries are hidden:

> What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds, accompanied by angels, to enforce the Cause [Amr] and the affairs to return unto Him? Qur'án 2:210

In the above verse there is a mention of an "expectation". This expectation has been linked to the coming of God in the future. In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly announced the fulfillment of this "joyful tiding" to the people of the world and invited them to search and investigate His claim, with a pure mind, detached from the expectations and vain imaginations of their ancestors:

> *Say: O people! the veil of vain imaginings hath been torn asunder ... and God hath appeared in the clouds of holiness, surrounded bya company of angels.*[67] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Cast away your vain imaginings. The All-Knowing hath come overshadowed with clouds.[68]
Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, the Hour hath come to pass .... O people, abandon your idle fancies. This is your Lord Who hath appeared from the heaven of divine Decree, invested with a mighty sovereignty.[69]
Bahá'u'lláh

Happy is he whose eyes have been cheered, in this Day, by beholding the Face of God, the King, the Exalted, the Mighty.[70]
Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Doth it not suffice you that the Lord of the heavens and of the earth hath come, with the power of Truth, in the glory of His Name, the Supreme Protector of all created things?[71]
Bahá'u'lláh

Concerning the station of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb states:

His Essence is the Manifestation of Divinity and Lordship.[72]

Bahá'u'lláh's parents had great love for their peerless son; inasmuch as from the beginning of His life, they saw astonishing signs in that child, signs of intelligence and maturity. His father Mirza Buzurg Nuri, one of the great calligraphers of the time, had transcribed the following two lines of poetry which he had affixed above the door of his summer mansion in the village of Tákur in Mázindarán:

When thou reachest the threshold of the Beloved say 'Aye',
For there neither '*salám*' nor '*alayk*' can find a way.*

This is the vale of Love, hold thy step;
This is holy ground, shed thy foot-gear.† [73]

The above two-verse poem is inspired by the following verse of the Qur'án:

I am, verily, your Lord. Remove your shoes! You are in the "sacred Vale of Ṭuwá" [near the Ṭúr, meaning "Mountain"]. I have chosen you; listen to what is being revealed to you. I am God; no God is there but Me. Then, worship Me, and Perform the prayer for My Remembrance.
Qur'án 20:12–14

The above verses are from Sura 20 Ṭá' Há'; these disconnected letters are the first two consonents of Tehran (Ṭihrán) where Bahá'u'lláh was born. Could this be only a coincidence?

As we have seen before, the title "**My Remembrance**" has been used, many times, to refer to each of the two Promised Onesof our time.

Despair and Denial of the Promise of "Meeting" God

Can a greater honor than "Meeting God" be imagined? In comparison to such an honor, all the treasures and glory in the world are like a drop compared to the sea. Why is it that people turn away from this matchless bounty? Many verses have been revealed in the Qur'án regarding the deniers of the "promise of Meeting God". These verses indicate that, in the beginning of the appearance

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* Salám means "peace", 'alayk' means "upon thee".

† That is what Moses heard on Mount Sinai, as He approached the Burning Bush.

of the Promised One, most of the people do not have the capacity to recognize Him; only after the passing of time do they realize His station.

> In truth, most of the people disbelieve in the meeting [with] their Lord. Qur'án 30:8

> Woe to the deniers, on that Day! Those who consider the "Day of Religion" a lie; only the rebellious sinners, hearing Our verses, would say: "these are tales of former generations" .... No, it is not so! On that Day, they shall be deprived of [Meeting] their Lord. Qur'án 83:10–15

> On that Day, man will say: "Where is the place to flee to?" No, there is no refuge! On that Day, the refuge is with thy Lord. Qur'án 75:10–12

> We will surely show them Our signs, in the world and within themselves, until it becomes plain to them that He [the Promised One] is the Truth. Is it not sufficient that thy Lord is a witness to all things? Unquestionably they are in doubt about the meeting with their Lord. Qur'án 41:53–54

> Those who deny the verses of God and the possibility of Meeting Him, despair (have given up hope) of My grace and mercy. For them, a great torment [has been decreed]. Qur'án 29:23

> Those who deny [the promise of] Meeting [with] God are of the lost; they are not guided. Qur'án 10:45

> *Thus doth God bring to naught the works of those who repudiate God, join partners with Him and cast doubt upon the testimony of their Lord; this notwithstanding that He hath appeared invested with every testimony.*[74] Bahá'u'lláh

> *God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing, and will forget them even as they have ignored His Presence in His day.*[75] Bahá'u'lláh

Some of the interpreters of the Qur'án say that the promise of the Presence of God is related to the next world. The following verse clarifies this matter:

> Yea, [after death] whatever they kept hidden will become clear to them. Qur'án 6:28

After the journey through this world and witnessing the grandeur and power of God in the next, how is it possible to deny the possibility of Meeting God? To attain the Presence of God in the next world is the greatest desire of every soul. If a soul denied such a bounty, how important would such a denial be? However, denying the fulfillment of God's promise in this world is of great importance; inasmuch as by denying the promise of God, one would have unknowingly denied God Himself (God forbid!). Note the following verse:

> Indeed, what God has promised will be fulfilled; you cannot escape it.Qur'án 6:134

> *That which hath debarred men from the Presence of God ... is the fact that they have been content with mere imaginings.*[76] Bahá'u'lláh

It is astonishing that despite the large number of verses, signs, announcements and promises, many contemporary Muslims are in great doubt and misgiving, and are deprived of the light of certitude and assurance. The distance between the wilderness of doubt and misgiving, and the city of

certitude and assurance is not great. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that what keeps us from exalted stations and nearness to God is no more than one step; He counsels us not to lose our chance and not to be negligent; and, before our brief journey through this world ends, to strive to attain the purpose of our creation—to take one step from this transient life into the world of immortality.

The Manifestations have prophesied that our age is the age of the spread of hopelessness; most of the believers ignore the announcement of the coming of the great chosen One of God, which is the greatest glad-tidings of the divine verses. Others, after hearing the news, rise up to oppose the Promised One. This hopelessness and this denial have been repeatedly foretold in the Qur'án:

> Those who deny the verses of God and [the promise of] meeting with Him, have no hope in My mercy; these will suffer a great torment. Qur'án 29:23

> *Say, O people! Observe that which God, exalted be His glory, hath exhorted you to observe. This is the Day of divine nearness and presence; it is the time for favor and loving-kindness.*[77] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is a great Day which is illumined by the light of divine unity.*[78] Bahá'u'lláh

> How awful that day will be! None will be like it. Jeremiah 30:7

Why is it that most Muslims, on hearing the "Great Announcement" and the fulfillment of this incomparable and peerless promise, do not arise to search and investigate? Why is it that instead of joy and happiness they are inclined to hopelessness and disappointment? Answering these questions requires writing another volume. Note the following few points:

- Because of disruption in the world social order, many people have become habituated to hopelessness and pessimism.
- Many believers, including Muslims, have chosen irreligion.
- Muslims have no hope of the appearance of another Messenger after Muḥammad.
- Hope in the "Presence of God" in this world is not easy; it requires a firm and unshakable faith in the promises of God.

The spread of hopelessness and pessimism in our age is a chronic and dangerous disease. We live through hope and are happy and sustained by the love of God. The death of hope means the death of a desire to live.

Our Creator loves us and has created us out of love. Is it possible for a lover to forget his beloved? Throughout the Qur'án our compassionate God confirms and repeats the "promise of Presence"; He even warns those Muslims who allow doubts regarding this firm promise—which is the chief among all promises—or persist in their hopelessness, that if they do not abandon this fatal poison they will be abandoned in the "wilderness of perplexity"; inasmuch as there is no pressure nor compulsion in the world of love and faith:

> Those who have no hope of meeting Us are abandoned in their disobedience. Qur'án 10:11

Words that have been emphasized and repeated more than other words in the verses of Liqá' "Meeting" are: "hopefulness" and "hopelessness":

Qur'án 18:110: Hopeful for the "Meeting of his Lord"

Qur'án 29:5: Hopeful for the "Meeting of God"

Qur'án 10:11: Have no hope for "Meeting Us"

> Those who deny God's verses and [the promise of] Meeting with Him, are without hope
> Qur'án 29:23

How pleasant and joyful is hope! Despair and hopelessness cause the bond of love and desire for life to be torn. Those who have no hope of living in the next world or the coming of another Manifestation in this world are such people.

Through the tongue of the Promised One of our age, God advises us, while there is yet time, to free ourselves from hopelessness, and to kindle the light of hope in our hearts. Read the following utterance carefully to discover the degree of God's love for each of His servants:

> *O MOVING FORM OF DUST! I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me. The sword of thy rebellion hath felled the tree of thy hope. At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.*[79]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The verses of the Qur'án indicate that many people have stepped even further than the bounds of hopelessness; they consider the promise of the Qur'án, i.e. the joyful tidings of the "Presence of God", a lie. God warns such deniers that the fruits of their life in this world would be nothing but harm and loss:

> Those who deny [the promise of] meeting God are of the lost; they are misguided.
> Qur'án 10:45

> They are those who disbelieve in the verses of their Lord and [the promise of] meeting Him; their [good] works will come to naught.
> Qur'án 18:105

It is clear that the "verses of Presence", which can also be called the "verses of hope", are addressed to the generality of the people of the world. They are addressed in particular to Muslims who consider Muḥammad to be the last of the Messengers; Muslims who say that God will never again be manifested—i.e. "Present"—in the world; those believers who consider the doors of God's bounty and favor to be shut. They tell themselves: In the seventh century CE after the death of the Messenger of Islám, God suddenly stopped communicating with man. From now on, humans will no longer hear the Words of their God. Centuries will pass, thousands of years, but our compassionate Creator will remain silent, inasmuch as humanity is not in need of any "joyful news" or new guidance from God.

The appearance of the two Promised Ones of our age is the greatest news in human history. The Qur'án refers to it as the "Great Announcement". The word

"Great" is special to this Revelation, and has only been used to refer to this Cause and Religion. The people of our age should be filled with indescribable joy as they witness the fulfillment of God's glad-tidings and the manifestation of this infinite grace and loving-kindness. How vast the number of the learned and prominent personalities who ardently wished to have lived in this era, so they could have been illumined with the radiance of the Sun of divine Reality! However, those who have received this gift are ungrateful and shall not benefit; because they are inured to hopelessness, and prefer ignorance to the divine grace and bestowal.

> *How many were the learned who desired My Presence in former ages; yet in this age, as soon as I revealed Myself, they turned away from Me.*[80] Bahá'u'lláh

After the passing of thousands of years, the meaning of the "Presence of God", which was the "hidden mystery", has been revealed and made clear by the Manifestation of our time, the "Glory of God", Who is the Mirror of the Light and Beauty of God. This is the New Spring of celebration and rejoicing; it is not the winter of despair and disappointment:

> *He Who is the All-Sufficing proclaimeth aloud: "The realm of joy hath been ushered in; be not sorrowful! The hidden mystery hath been made manifest; be not disheartened!"*[81] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Now is the time to arise and magnify the Lord; keep your hearts pure! Say: O Friends! Cleanse your souls of worldly attachments, busy yourselves in praise of the Incomparable Friend ... O Friends! Let not separation make you sorrowful; this is the day of rejoicing, not the time of grief.*[82] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O servant of God! ... The Messenger of God hath appeared: Now is not the hour for hesitation. Open thou thine inner eye that thou mayest behold the face of the Beloved, and hearken thou with thine inner ear that thou mayest hear the sweet murmur of His celestial voice.*[83] Bahá'u'lláh

Those who oppose the Bahá'í Faith, unknowingly fulfill the verses related to the appearance of the two Promised Onesof our time. In this way, they also have a part in the fulfillment of the promises of God:

> *Every word uttered by the enemies of the Faith of God, in itself proclaimeth this Most Great Announcement, and guideth all to this Straight Path.*[84] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The opposition of the enemies can only benefit the Cause of God.*[85] Bahá'u'lláh

> Whosoever has the hopes of Meeting his God, must engage in praiseworthy deeds and, in the worship of God, not make anyone a partner with Him. Qur'án 18:110

> *God hath barred the unbelievers from beholding His Beauty.*[86] Bahá'u'lláh

In the Scriptures, the word "Mushrik" has been used with at least two different meanings:

- Those who do not believe in the one true God, the ungodly, the infidel
- Those who are unworthy of recognition of God's Promised One and deny Him.

As we will see, in detail, in chapter 26, the recognition of the Manifestation of God has many conditions. God will never reveal His Beauteous Countenance to strangers!

Promise of the "Presence" to the Children of Israel

The divine scriptures have not only referred to the Promised One of our time as the appearance of God, they have also referred to the time of His appearance as the "Day of God". According to the testimony of the Qur'án, God addressed Moses in the following way:

> Remind them [the children of Israel] of the "Days of God".* Qur'án 14:5

> ... the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand. Joel 2:1

> *We have, in truth, sent down unto you a man like yourselves that He may remind you of the Days of God.*[87] The Báb

All matters concerning the relationship of humanity to God have been explained in the Qur'án, whether clearly or veiled in allegory:

> ... [the Qur'án] is the detailed explanation of all things. Qur'án 12:111

However, in that Book, which can be considered the "Encyclopedia of Divine Sciences", no other promise has been discussed more clearly than the promise of the appearance of God.

> We then gave Moses the Book .... Perchance His followers may become assured of meeting their Lord.Qur'án 6:154We verily gave Moses the Book; then be not in doubt concerning "Meeting Him"; We made Him [Moses)] the source of guidance to the children of Israel. Qur'án 32:23

Whose Presence does "Meeting Him" refer to? Regarding Whose "Presence" do people have doubts? These and many other instances of "verses of Presence" refer to the appearance of our Promised One.

In the next verse, the tongue of Revelation informs us that a group among the children of Israel know the Promised One, and are engaged in guiding others:

> From among them We have chosen a group of leaders who, by Our leave, engage in guiding other people; inasmuch as they were patient and were assured of our verses. Qur'án 32:24

This prophecy of the Qur'án has also been fulfilled. Many Jews have accepted the Bahá'í Faith, and as a result they honor Muḥammad, the Apostle of God; these believers have been active in guiding the people of the world, including Muslims.

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* Referring to this promise of God, the Báb states: *"Thus do We Reveal unto you and to the Prophets and Messengers before you that remind the people of the Days of God. Indeed the Day of God will come; God is the All-Sufficient, the All-Praised."* Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 46.

How strange that the children of Abraham and the heirs of Moses attained faith, and drank of the ocean of the loving-kindness of God, exalted be His glory .... But the members of that heedless sect [the Shí'ihs] *continue, until the pesent time, to be heedless and veiled.*[88] Bahá'u'lláh

If we assume that the promise of the "Presence of God" began with Moses, from the time of the declaration of that promise until its fulfillment was over 3,000 years; for this reason, the former Messengers have asked their followers to be patient until the time of the fulfillment of this unparalleled promise, and not to give up hope.

Be patient for (the coming of) your Lord. Qur'án 74:7

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him. Psalm 37:7

As we noted above, Jews who are honored with the Presence of God have shown "patience" and "certitude" (Qur'án 32:24).

The "Day of God" is a great day, the world has not previously seen its like:

A great Day—a day when the people stand before the Lord of creation.
Qur'án 83:5-6

Bahá'u'lláh's humility before God

It is necessary to again emphasize that, contrary to the claims of the enemies of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'ís do not believe that Bahá'u'lláh is God. Throughout His Writings, His servitude towards God, and even towards the believers, is clear as the radiant sun:

This Servant, this Wronged One, is abashed to claim for Himself any existence whatever, how much more those exalted grades of being! Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.[89] Bahá'u'lláh

This Wronged One .... Hath raised the banner of "He, verily is God, there is none other God besides Him".[90] Bahá'u'lláh

I have not been accounted among the learned; rather, this bounty proceedeth from the grace of God, and is not of Mine own deserving.[91] Bahá'u'lláh

We have never gloried in any thing, nor did We seek preference over any soul. To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. In the company of the poor We have sought their fellowship, and amidst the exalted and learned We have been submissive and resigned.[92] Bahá'u'lláh

In many of His Tablets and Letters addressed to His followers, Bahá'u'lláh refers to Himself as "this Servant" or "this lowly Servant".

Convey the greetings of this Servant to the friends in that land ....[93] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's humility and meekness is clear and radiant throughout His Writings:

By Thy glory, O Lord of all being, and the Desire of all creation! I would love to lay My face upon every single spot of Thine earth, that perchance it might be honored by touching a spot ennobled by the footsteps of Thy loved ones![94] Bahá'u'lláh

The one true God well knoweth and Himself testifieth that I have not desired nor will ever desire anything but His good-pleasure.[95] Bahá'u'lláh

O Thou Eternal God! Thou knowest and art my witness that this Servant, at all times and under all conditions, hath sought naught but Thy good-pleasure, and if it be Thy Will, through Thy loving-kindness, He shall seek naught else .... How can this Servant's words be worthy of acceptance by Thee, or his utterance be mentioned in Thy Presence? How can utter nothingness upraise the standard of existence ...?[96] Bahá'u'lláh

This Youth is disinclined to claim anything but the station of absolute servitude. By Him Who holdest in His grasp My Soul! Servitude is the goal and desire of My life.[97] Bahá'u'lláh

I am, verily, a Servant Who hath believed in God, His Messengers and His Chosen Ones; I claim no station for Myself; He, in truth, hath chosen Me and sent Me to the people of the world ... Dost thou imagine that I speak on My Own behalf, or that I exist by My Own decree? Nay, by the Lord of creation! Rather the breezes of His Decree move Me as it desireth and willeth.[98] Bahá'u'lláh

The expression of servitude to God has been the way of all Manifestations:

For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain .... Methinks, they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy.[99] Bahá'u'lláh

Cast away your vain imaginings, hearken then unto that which the Tongue of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing hath uttered. How long will ye follow your idle fancies? The Sun of guidance hath dawned; turn unto it, sanctified from all that the divines among you said aforetime. I swear by God! This is indeed, the Revelatin of God .... He will not be recognized through such words of the people of contention as ye possess. Draw ye near unto Him with illumined eyes and radiant faces. Thus hath ye been commanded in the Tablets by God, the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-informed.[100] Bahá'u'lláh

Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived. From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: "Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. I have manifested Myself unto men, and have sent down Him Who is the Day Spring of the signs of My Revelation. Through Him I have caused all creation to testify that there is none other God except Him, the Incomparable, the All-Informed, the All-Wise." He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.[101] Bahá'u'lláh

Bear thou witness, even as God hath testified for Himself ere the creation of heavens and earth that, verily, there is none other God but Him, and that this Youth is His Servant and His Light.[102]
Bahá'u'lláh

He Whose advent hath been foretold in the heavenly Scriptures is come, could ye but understand it. The world's horizon is illumined by the splendours of this Most Great Revelation. Haste ye with radiant hearts and be not of them that are bereft of understanding.[103]
Bahá'u'lláh

In hundreds of prayers, Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly engages in a loving conversation with His Creator, and expresses His servitude, powerlessness and evanescence in the face of the grandeur and greatness of God.

If anyone reflects, with a pure heart and an open mind, on the following prayer, it will be sufficient for him to discover the love and servitude expressed by that Promised One, and he will attain the fountainhead of knowledge:

Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! The tongues of all created things testify to Thy sovereignty and Thine omnipotence, and proclaim mine own poverty and my wretchedness when face to face with the revelations of Thy wealth. Look, then, O my God, upon this sinner whose gaze hath, at all times, been fixed upon the source of Thy forgiveness, and whose eyes have been bent upon the horizon of Thy grace and Thy gifts.

Ever since the day Thou didst create me at Thy bidding, O my God, and didst arouse me through the gentle winds of Thy tender mercies, I have refused to turn to any one except Thee, and have, through the power of Thy sovereignty and Thy might, arisen to face Thine enemies, and have summoned all mankind unto the shores of the ocean of Thy oneness and the heaven of Thine all-glorious unity. I have sought, all my days, not to guard myself from the mischief of the rebellious among Thy creatures, but rather to exalt Thy name amidst Thy people. I have, thereby, suffered what none of Thy creatures hath suffered.

How many the days, O my God, which I have spent in utter loneliness with the transgressors amongst Thy servants, and how many the nights, O my Best-Beloved, during which I lay a captive in the hands of the wayward amidst Thy creatures! In the midst of my troubles and tribulations I have continued to celebrate Thy praise before all who are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, and have not ceased to extol Thy wondrous glory in the kingdoms of Thy Revelation and of Thy creation, though all that I have been capable of showing forth hath fallen short of the greatness and the majesty of Thy oneness, and is unworthy of Thine exaltation and of Thine omnipotence.

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou Who art the one alone Beloved! I find myself to be only nothing before the habitation of Thy great glory. Every time I attempt to extol any one of Thy virtues, my heart restraineth me, for naught but Thee is able to soar into the atmosphere of the kingdom of Thy nearness, or reach up to the heaven of Thy presence.

Thy might beareth me witness! I am well aware that were I to bow myself before a handful of dust, from now until the end that hath no end, in acknowledgment of its relationship to Thy name, the Fashioner, I would still find myself far removed from that dust, and incapable of approaching it, and would discover that such an adoration can in no wise befit it, nor transcend the limitations to which I myself have been subjected. And were I to arise to serve one of Thy servants, and to wait at

his door so long as Thine own kingdom endureth and Thine omnipotence will last, as a sign of my acknowledgment of the tie that bindeth him to Thy name, the Creator, I would, likewise,—and to this Thy glory beareth me witness—have to confess my complete failure to do him adequate service, and my deprivation of what can truly befit his station. And this for the reason that I recognize in them naught else except the bond that bindeth them to Thy names and Thine attributes. How can, then, such a man succeed in befittingly extolling the One through a motion of Whose finger all the names and their kingdom were called into being, and all the attributes and their dominion were created, and Who, through yet another motion of that same finger, hath united the letters B and E (Be) and knit them together, manifesting thereby what the highest thoughts of Thy chosen ones who enjoy near access to Thee are unable to grasp, and what the profoundest wisdom of those of Thy loved ones that are wholly devoted to Thee are powerless to fathom.

I swear by Thy glory, O Beloved of my soul! I am bewildered when I contemplate the tokens of Thy handiwork, and the evidences of Thy might, and find myself completely unable to unravel the mystery of the least of Thy signs, how much more to apprehend Thine own Self. ....[104]
Bahá'u'lláh

In the Name of God, the Incomparable! The Pen of the Most High saith: Whatever hath been written in the Books of God, and been hidden from the eyes hath, in this Day, been made manifest and clear. No excuse hath there been or remain for anyone.[105]
Bahá'u'lláh

1 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65 (no. XXVII)
2 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 257. (prov. tr.)
3 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 23.
4 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 111.
5 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 245 (no. CLIII)
6 Ad'iyyih-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-Maḥbúb, p. 328. (prov. tr.)
7 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 113.
8 Majmú'iy-i-Munáját, Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 157. (prov. tr.)
9 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, pp. 226–227. (prov. tr.)
10 The Persian Bayán, p. 81. (prov. tr.)
11 The Persian Bayán, p. 321. (prov. tr.)
12 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 3 (gr. 1.1)
13 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 149 (no. LXXXVIII)
14 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63 (no. XXVI)
15 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 73–74 (no. XXX)
16 The Persian Bayán, p. 154. (prov. tr.)
17 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103.
18 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 151 (no. LXXXIX)
19 *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 172–175.
20 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 177–178.
21 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 66–67 (no. XXVII)
22 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 234 (note 160)
23 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167 (no. LXXXIV)
24 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 85. (prov. tr.)
25 The Persian Bayán, p. 270. (prov. tr.)
26 The Persian Bayán, p. 113. (prov. tr.)
27 The Persian Bayán, p. 81. (prov. tr.)
28 The Persian Bayán, pp. 121–122. (prov. tr.)
29 The Persian Bayán, p. 82. (prov. tr.)

30 Qadímí, Riáḍ—Siyyid-i-Rusul, Ḥaḍrat-i-Muhammad, printed by Toronto University,1988, pp. 126–127.
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32 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 49.
33 Days of Remembrance, p. 185
34 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 391. (prov. tr.)
35 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 228 (no. CXIII)
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37 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 101.
38 The Persian Bayán, p. 252. (prov. tr.)
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40 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 138.
41 The Persian Bayán, p. 254. (prov. tr.)
42 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 169 (gr. 181)
43 Afnán, Abu'l-Qásim, 'Ahd-i-A'lá (the Life of the Báb), p. 335. (prov. tr.)
44 The Persian Bayán, p. 222. (prov. tr.)
45 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 170 (gr. 182)
46 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 118.
47 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 70 (no. XXVIII)
48 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 50.
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50 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 123.
51 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 56. (prov. tr.)
52 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 41.
53 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 179–180 (gr. 196)
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61 The Persian Bayán, p. 19.
62 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 13.
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72 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 397. (prov. tr.)
73 Bahá'u'lláh: the King of Glory, p. 19.
74 Daryáy-i-Dánish, p. 133. (prov. tr.)
75 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 256 (gr. 287)
76 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 5. (prov. tr.)
77 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 1 and 2, p. 155. (prov. tr.)
78 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 234. (prov. tr.)
79 The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian no. 21, p. 29.
80 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 103. (prov. tr.)

81 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (gr. 5.7)
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100 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 255. (prov. tr.)
101 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 49 (no. XX)
102 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 308. (prov. tr.)
103 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 244.
104 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 301–304 (no. CLXXIX)
105 Majmú'iy-i-Mubárakih Az Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, pp. 288–289.

14
The great Day of God

According to the testimony of the divine Scriptures, our era begins a new chapter in human history—an era that fulfills the following request and wish of Christ:

> Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

> *That Day is a great Day.*[1] The Báb

> *From among all days, the Lord of the world, hath associated a Day with Himself, and called it the Day of God.*[2] The Báb

Baghdád, the city of the Presence

There are many verses in the Qur'án that mention the "Presence of God"; one of these verses even tells us the name of the city where the Promised One resides. In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* Bahá'u'lláh mentions that verse:

> And God calleth to the Abode of Peace (Dár as-Salám); and He guideth whom He will into the right way. Qur'án 10:25

According to *Sukhan Dictionary*, in the works of early Iranian authors, "Darussalám" has been used to refer to Baghdád; the following examples have been mentioned:

- Alá'udawlih ... conquered the Darussalám, Baghdád (Wálih Iṣfahání, 169)
- Step by step, he reached the territory of Darussalám, Baghdád. (AFlákí, 616)

According to the two-volume *'Amíd Dictionary*, a best-selling dictionary in Iran, Darussalám has been used in the works of early writers to refer to two cities: Baghdád and Shíráz. Hafiz has linked these two cities in his poetry:

> We did not reach our purpose in Shíráz
> Happy the day when Hafiz sets out for Baghdád.

Beyond the names of cities, the dictionaries have recorded two meanings for Darussalám: "Abode of Peace" and "Paradise".

The Proclamation of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were made in Shíráz and Baghdád respectively, The Qur'án announces that God invites us to a special city; centuries later, the two Manifestations of God, Who did not see each other in a physical sense, Reveal their Cause in two cities located in two different countries; those two cities have a common label—Dár as-Salám ("The Abode of Peace")—the same title foretold in the Qur'án.

According to the Qur'án, God invites people to Dár as-Salám and to the right path; the following utterance of Bahá'u'lláh fulfills this promise of the Qur'án:

> *Say, O people! Your days shall pass with the swiftness of lightening, and soon will all your desires and wealth be folded up. Shake off the slumber of negligence, and with your trust placed wholly in God, set firm your steps on the straight path of His*

Cause. Enter the Abode of Peace of God's mercy and loving-kindness which is the realm of everlasting safety, and the station of transcendent glory. Outwardly, the Abode of Peace is the land where the most great Luminary (the Promised One) hath manifested Himself, and inwardly, it signifieth this firm and strong Cause.[3]
Bahá'u'lláh

The King of Oneness (God) hath formerly inspired Muhammad's illumined heart and summoned His own people to this land (Baghdád).[4] Bahá'u'lláh

Why is God inviting people to Shíráz and Baghdád? And what is the connection between the two matters of "inviting to the Abode of Peace" and "the guidance of the people to the right way"? People who responded to the call of the two Promised Ones and accepted Their Cause received the gift of the "straight path" or the "right way".

There are other mysteries and meanings hidden in the "Abode of Peace"; because Dár as-Salám also means "Paradise"; those who are invited there are truly invited into Paradise; in addition, the garden in which Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Cause of God was named Riḍván ("Paradise", "garden of Paradise", or "gatekeeper of Paradise"). Regarding the call and guidance of God in our era, there is a verse in the Bible similar to that in the Qur'án:

The Qur'án	The Bible
Invitation: God calleth to the Abode of Peace	Invitation: Many are invited
Choice: And He guideth whom He will into the right way. Qur'án 10:25	Choice: but few are chosen. Matt. 22:14

There is another verse in the Qur'án regarding Dár as-Salám. That verse connects the name of the city, not only with "finding the right way", but also with "being in the Presence of God". Let us compare these verses:

Baghdád: the City of Peace

And God calleth to the Abode of Peace; and guideth whom He will into the right way. Qur'án 10:25	This is the straight path of Thy Lord .... Theirs the Abode of Peace with their Lord, and He is [will be] their Guardian because of what they were doing [His bidding]. Qur'án 6:126–127

Similarities between the Bible and the Qur'án

In Qur'án 2:210, God asks people: "What do the infidels expect but that God shall come down to them ..." meaning "Are they expecting anything other than the coming of their God? The tone of the question indicates that no doubt should there be regarding this "Great Announcement" and this unique and matchless invitation; people's hopelessness and doubts are the result of their lack of faith in God's words.

What is the meaning of "overshadowed with clouds"? The physical world cannot contain the Spiritual Essence of its Creator. Therefore, to appear in this world, God chooses a perfect Human, through Whom His glorious Spirit is reflected. Then , He manifests Himself, through the Chosen One and speaks to us according to our capacities and capabilities. In the allegorical verses, the body of the Chosen One is likened to clouds. In the physical world, we must

avoid looking directly at the sun as it can blind us. Clouds create a protective barrier. Likewise the "cloud" of the physical body of the Chosen One veils from our vision the blinding glory and grandeur of God. Thus we can "see" God and "know" Him through the Person of the Chosen One, according to our spiritual capacity. How can a more beautiful analogy be found to describe this concept?

There are great similarities between the utterances of former Manifestations. Let us compare the promise of the appearance of the chosen One of our era spoken by two great Manifestations:

The promise of the Return of Christ in the Bible

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky .... They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven .... And he will send his angels ... and they will gather his elect ....

Matt. 24:30–31

The promise of the presence of God in the Qur'án

What can such expect other than God shall come down to them overshadowed with clouds, accompanied by angels?

Qur'án 2:210

Both divine Scriptures give us the glad-tidings of the coming of the Promised One Who:

- Comes down from heaven
- Overshadowed with clouds
- And accompanied by angels

What is the meaning of "angels"? Angels are God's sanctified and devout followers who assist the new Messenger. Among the responsibilities of these followers is to spread the "Great Announcement" to all inhabitants of the world; so that with the power of faith in the Messenger of God, the sanctified believers who are considered the "chosen ones" of God, are gathered together, and with the help of each other, establish a new and glorious civilization. That is why is He said: *"He will send His angels ... and they will gather His elect ...."*

The coming of the *Amr* ("Cause") is mentioned after the prophecy of the coming of God in verse 2:210. Once again *Amr* ("Cause, Command") has been linked to the coming of the Promised One, the new Manifestation of God. What is the purpose of the appearance of the Promised One? It is to proclaim the Cause and the Religion of God.

Finally, the new *Amr* ("Cause") of God—i.e. the new religion of God appears, and older Umúr ("Causes", "Affairs") return to God. With the appearance of the Bahá'í Cause, the era of all the other older "Causes" is ended. In this Era, all people are in need of one "Cause". When the "Hour" comes to pass, i.e. the time of the fulfillment of the promise of God, all other "Causes" return to their Creator (*to God return all Causes or Affairs*); and a new "Cause" replaces them (*the Cause comes to pass*).

> *In this most mighty Revelation, all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest and final consummation.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

Comparison of some Qur'anic verses

There are great similarities and connections between verses 2:210 and 32:5. One informs us of the coming of a Promised One in the name of God; the other specifies the time of the coming of that Promised One. Let us study them side-by-side:

> What can they expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds and accompanied by angels, and the Cause [*Amr*] is fulfilled, and the Causes [*Umúr*] shall return unto God? Qur'án 2:210

> God administers the Cause [*Amr*, i.e. Islám] from the heaven to the earth. Then it [that Cause] shall return to Him in a day that is a thousand years according to your reckoning. Qur'án 32:5

Verse 32:5 prophecies the period of Islám as "one day that is a thousand years". This day-of-a-thousand-years began when the period of divine administration ended in AH 260 with the death of the 11th Imám, Ḥasan Askarí. Thus the day-of-a-thousand-years culminated in AH 1260 with the Proclamation of the Báb in Shíráz.

Verse 32:5 announces that the *Amr* ("Cause", i.e. Islám) returns to God; verse 2:210 also uses *Amr* ("Cause") in the singular and plural. The singular form speaks of the coming of the new *Amr* ("Cause"), and the plural form speaks of the return of older *Umúr* ("Causes") to God. The similarity and connection between the two verses is clear.

Another verse of the Qur'án links "administers the Cause" with the promise of "the Presence of God":

> ... He [God] will administer His Cause [*Amr*]. He makes His verses clear, that you may be assured of [the promise of] attaining the Presence of your Lord. Qur'án 13:2

We can relate the above verse to the past and also to the future; if we connect it to the past, it means that God revealed the Cause (Religion) of Islám, explained the related verses, so that we may be assured of the promise of attaining the "Presence of God". If we associate the verse with the future events, it means that God reveals a new Cause (Religion), explains the verses related to the new Revelation, through the new Promised One, so that we may acknowledge that the promise of the "Presence of God" is true and has been fulfilled.

It is befitting to ponder the verses that include *Amr* (Cause, Religion) or Umúr (Causes, Religions) to better understand the glad-tidings of the Qur'án:

Qur'án 32:5	The Cause (Islám) appears	Then it returns unto God
Qur'án 13:2	The (new) Cause appears	This time you will attain the Presence of God
Qur'án 2:210	The (new) Cause appears	The former Causes return to God

Conclusion of a period of prophecy and the start of a new era

The former centuries were the period of "Prophecy" and "Announcement". Our age is the time of fulfillment of the promise. It is a "Resurrection" in which two Promised ones have appeared in the name of God. With the manifestation of the Báb, a new chapter opens in human history, inaugurating an era when, for the first time, the people of the world will live in peace and tranquility under a divine Government. The Qur'án labels these two eras: "the First Day" and "the Second Day" (Qur'án 41:12). Bahá'u'lláh refers to these two eras in His Writings:

> *The age of prophecy ended with the appearance of Him Who is the Friend of God, until the Day of Resurrection. And this Resurrection is the Day of the appearance of God in the Manifestation of His own Self.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Assuredly the tabernacle of prophethood hath been folded up, and the One Who hath sent every Prophet is now come with manifest power and dominion.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

> *When God sent forth His Prophet Muḥammad, on that day the termination of the prophetic cycle was foreordained in the knowledge of God. Yea, that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained.*[8] The Báb

Both Imám 'Alí and Imám Ṣádiq have described the Apostle of God, Muḥammad, in this way:

> The conclusion of what hath passed and the inaugurator of what is to come.[9]

The Apostle of God is the last of the Messengers Who announced the glad-tidings of the coming of a Promised One in the name of God, and an era named the "Day of God". With the Revelation of the Báb, the "Age of Announcement and Expectation" ended, and the "Age of Fulfillment of Prophecy" began.

Government of God upon the world

Divine Scriptures prophesy that not only will a Messenger appear in the name of God, but also that the Messenger will establish, for the first time, the "Government of God" among the people. Let us examine some of these verses:

> And [on that day] the Kingdom will be the Lord's Obadiah 1:21

> Your Lord is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days; then He ascended the Throne to administer His Cause [*Amr*] .... Will you not then remember? Qur'án 10:3

In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly testifies to the fulfillment of the promises of the Qur'án:

> He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come. The Kingdom is God's, the Omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Blessed is he who hath attained His presence, when He established Himself upon the Throne ....[10] Bahá'u'lláh

In verse 10:3 are several allusions that need to be explained. Outwardly the verse states that God created the world in six Days, which—if taken literally—is contrary to the dictates of science; and sitting upon the Throne is unworthy of

the exalted station of God. Verses that connect or limit the Creator to human affairs or human existence—such as sitting upon a throne, or coming in the shadow of clouds—are allegorical. They relate to the Manifestation who is God's Promised One, but not literally to the Almighty God. Let us see what symbols have been used in the previous verse:

- *Your God Who created the heaven and the earth in six Days*

  As previously discussed, "heaven" in allegorical verses denotes "religion"; and "earth" indicates the "heart" of man. Also, the length of a Day in such verses is equal to a thousand years. God has aided us in defining the "length of a Day" and has disclosed this mystery. The creation of "heaven and earth" in "six Days", or 6,000 years, is a reference to the progressive revelation of a series of religions and the role of those religions in the progress and development of the human race. Adam, the great Messenger of God, opened a new stage in the history of the spiritual evolution of humanity. For this reason, the first Messenger mentioned in the Qur'án is Adam. From the time of Adam until the present humanity has progressively traversed a path of growth and evolution (spiritual recreation). By dispatching Messengers with Their religions over this period, God has impelled humanity along stages of increasing progress and perfection.

- *Then He ascended the Throne*

  "God's ascension to the Throne" in verse 10:3 is a reference to the coming of God's Messenger after 6,000 years; "ascending the Throne" means the government of God is inaugurated through His chosen One; hence "sitting on the Throne" and "coming overshadowed by clouds" have allegorical meanings; both refer to the appearance and shining of the light of God in the Mirror of the Manifestations.

> *Any reference to His being established upon the throne implieth that the Exponent of His Revelation is established upon the seat of transcendent authority...*[11] The Báb

The expression "establishment upon the Throne" is also used in the same way in Christian and Jewish Scriptures; because they have also been given the glad-tidings of the coming of their Promised One in the name of God, Who would, at last, establish the Kingdom of God:

> I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs .... And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
>
> Isaiah 6:1–3

In the above verses, "his glory" is a reference to the "glory of God", which is the meaning of "Bahá'u'lláh".

> They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them ... he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.
>
> Rev. 7:15–17

> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6–7

The "zeal of the Lord" in Persian is "Shough-i-Rabb". Shoughi Rabbání is the name of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith who is the organizer of the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith. This order is the foundation for a future world order and God's government will be established upon it.

- God will administer His Cause (*Amr*)

After six Days, God will be seated upon the throne where *"He will administer the Cause"* is repeated again; the verse *"He will administer the Cause from heaven to the earth"* (Qur'án 32:5) refers to a day of a thousand yearsduring which God administers, from heaven, the Cause of Islám.

The great Iranian poet, Shaykh 'Aṭṭár, has a poem regarding this promise:

Six Days are the period of six Messengers
Yet the day of religion is a thousand years
Once the six thousand years have lapsed
The period of religion shall surely end

I was thus instructed by the Qur'án
that is how the world orbits
the people's Successor appears
by the Will of God the Last Day is come[12]

The topic of "ascending the Throne" is mentioned in several Qur'anic verses; one of these includes an additional matter that we need to discuss:

> He Who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six Days, then ascended onto the throne of the Merciful (God). Ask the one who knows about Him. Qur'án 25:59

The additional fact in the above verse is:

> Ask the one who knows about Him.

It is clear that whenever the new Promised One appears, only His followers will have true knowledge about Him. However, people frequently ask their co-religionists, and even the enemies of the new Faith, about that Faith. This is the custom, not just among Muslims, but also among the followers of all religions. For example, if a Christian wants to know something about Islám he will ask a leader of his Faith, not a Muslim leader or scholar. Whatever Muslims have learned about the Bahá'í Faith has been learnt from their own religious leaders or even from the enemies of the Bahá'ís. Clearly this method does not conform to reason and wisdom, and is contrary to God's command.

Since the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our time until the present, enemies of the Bahá'í Faith have been busy writing many books to denounce and deny the claims of the Promised Ones. Great are the number of simple-minded and uninformed people who read and accept what is written in these books, unaware that they are filled throughout with calumnies and lies.

Verse 25:59 instructs us to seek knowledge of the Promised One from people who are informed. The following verse names those people from whom we must ask if we want to learn about the Promised One:

> If you do not know, then ask the followers of the Remembrance [*Dhikr*]. Qur'án 16:43

As we have repeatedly seen in this book, *Dhikr* ("Remembrance") is one of the most important titles of the Báb—He has used this title, more than any other, when referring to Himself.

Let us return to the topic under discussion, i.e. the government of God over the world. The following verse also announces the government of God in our era:

> The Day when the heavens are cleft asunder by clouds, and the angels descend; in that Day the government, indeed, belongs to the Merciful [God]. Qur'án 25:25-26

Note the following symbols in the above verse:

Symbol	The meaning of the symbol
The Day when the heaven is cleft by clouds	The Day when the "body of a man" cleaves the heaven of the "Amr" with the religion of God
And the angels also shall descend	In that heaven, sanctified and sacrificing believers also appear and accompany Him

In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly confirmed the fulfillment of this promise:

> *The heaven of every religion hath been rent, and the earth of human understanding been cleft asunder, and the angels of God are seen descending.*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The All-Bounteous is come mounted upon the clouds!*[14] Bahá'u'lláh

The following Qur'anic verses mention the government of God in our era:

> On that Day, the government is God's; He will rule among them. Qur'án 22:56

> This Day, the government is God's, the One [Incomparable], the Omnipotent. Qur'án 40:16

> *This is the Day in which every atom in universe testifieth that, in truth, the kingdom is God's, the Incomparable, the Unconstrained.*[15] Bahá'u'lláh

Raḥmán ("merciful")

In the Qur'án, *raḥmán* ("merciful") has sometimes been used to refer to God, and other times, in reference to the Promised One of our time, Bahá'u'lláh. The The verse below is addressed to those who consider Jesus as the son of God, in the same way as humans have children:

> They say: "The Merciful [God, *ar-Raḥmán*] hath taken a son for Himself".* Qur'án 21:26

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* Raḥmán is used here to refer to God

The Messengers are the manifestations of all God's attributes and names. The name "Raḥmán" refers to them all; however, it especially refers to the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, in particular to the "establishment of God on His Throne". The Báb also repeatedly uses the word to refer to Bahá'u'lláh.

> In that Day, the government, indeed, belongs to the Merciful [*ar-Raḥmán* God] Qur'án 25:26

> The Merciful [*ar-Raḥmán*] is seated upon the Throne. Qur'án 20:5

The following verse is about the followers of *ar-Raḥmán*, i.e. the Promised One of our era:

> The servants of the Merciful [*ar-Raḥmán*] are those who walk the earth softly; and when the ignorant address them, they reply softly (peacefully). Qur'án 25:63

The following verse is about the deniers of *ar-Raḥmán*:

> And when it is said to them: "Bow before the Merciful [*ar-Raḥmán*]"; they say: "Who is the Merciful [ar-Raḥmán]?" Should we bow to what you command us? This [conversation] increases their aversion. Qur'án 25:60

The following verse refers to those who respond to the invitation of the "Caller", i.e. the Promised One of the age, and are humble before Him:

> On that Day, they follow the "Caller", in Whom there is no crookedness [shortcoming]; voices are humble before Him .... Thus We revealed the Qur'án in Arabic* and, in it, elaborated the warnings, perchance they are warned or it be a reminder for them. Qur'án 20:108–113

As we saw before, in both the Qur'án and the Bible, the word invitation is used in reference to the appearance of the Promised One:

> God invites [the people] to the Abode of Peace (Baghdád). Qur'án 10:25

In the previous verse from Sura 20 Ṭá' Há' the "Caller", in Whom no crookedness or fault exists, is mentioned. Only God's Messengers are adorned with such degrees of perfection. The matters of warning and reminding are also often used in connection with the coming of the Promised Ones.

In addition, *dhikr* ("remembrance, reminder") has been subtly used to refer to the the Promised One, as the reason for His coming is to remind and notify. As an added proof, a ḥadíth in *Biḥár al-Anwár* confirms the connection between the last three words of 20:113 with the coming of the promised Qá'im.[16]

Several verses later, the Qur'án warns those who deny the Dhikr:

> Whosoever turns away from My *Dhikr* will have a difficult life. Qur'án 20:124

The terrible fate of the deniers of the new Religion of God is also predicted in the following verse:

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* Why does verse 20:113 mention the Qur'án being in Arabic? Perhaps because the "Caller" will be in a land where Arabic is spoken, and the people there can read the verses in their own language; this prophecy was fulfilled since Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His Mission in Baghdád.

> On that Day, the dominion is, in truth, with the Merciful [*ar-Raḥmán*]; and that Day is a greatly difficult Day for the unbelievers. Qur'án 25:26

Many times, the Báb uses *ar-Raḥmán* "the Merciful" to refer to the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. The following quote demonstrates that "the Merciful" in Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán also refers to Bahá'u'lláh:

> *... the Day when the Lord of mercy [ar-Raḥmán] shall come down unto you in the shadow of the clouds with the angels circling around Him,*[17] The Báb

> *Such people of the Bayan, they who turned away from the All-Merciful.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

The following quote uses *ar-Raḥmán* to mean God or the Promised One of the age:

> *Verily, all your vain imaginings shall be folded up. He Who is the All-Merciful hath come with a mighty Cause; He, in truth, is the Great Announcement Whom the Merciful God hath mentioned in the Qur'án. Blessed is he who hath inhaled the fragrance of His utterance and attained unto this wondrous Day.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

As we saw above, the deniers refuse to humble themselves before *ar-Raḥmán*:

> *Soon will the Al-Merciful summon you to humble yourselves before Him.*[20] The Báb

> *They who refuse to bow down before the All-Merciful are indeed numbered among the inmates of the fire, as justly decreed by God, the All-Knowing; and God is informed of all things.*[21]
>
> The Báb

Throne of God

Verse 69:17 links the "Throne of God" to the number 8. Let us see what mystery is hidden in this verse:

> On that Day, the Event comes to pass .... And the angels will be around it, and eight will carry the Throne of God above their heads. Qur'án 69:15, 17

Verse 89:22 states that angels will accompany the coming of the "Lord" (God):

> And your Lord [God] will come accompanied by angels, rank upon rank.
>
> Qur'án 89:22

> *O people! Suffer not yourselves to be veiled from the Beauty of God* Who hath come overshadowed with clouds, and around Whom circle the hosts of the angels of holiness.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

What day is the promised Day? And what "Event" will occur on that Day? What mystery is hidden in the number 8? The phrase "that Day" in referring to the time of the revelation of the Promised One has repeatedly been mentioned

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* The Beauty of God is a reference to God's reflection in His Messenger Who has, in this age, removed the veil from His countenance:
O dwellers in the land of God! The peerless Friend hath appeared unveiled ... while there is yet time be occupied with the mention of the everlasting and turn unto the Face of the Lord. Bahá'u'lláh (Ad'íy-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-Maḥbúb, p. 315)

throughout the Qur'án and the Bible. The "Event" in the first verse of Sura 88 al-Ghá<u>sh</u>iya ("The overwhelming event") has also been used in reference to this Revelation. Let us see what the number 8 means.

Verse 69:17 has been interpreted in the Bahá'í Writings, and has been fulfilled in two ways. First, 'Abdu'l-Bahá connected it to the name of our Promised One, Bahá'. The Word Bahá' is equal to 9 in abjad reckoning:

Bá'	Há'	Alif	Hamza	Total
2	5	1	1	9

Let us now see what link exists between the number 8 in the Qur'án and the number 9. In verse 69:17 (see above), it is predicted that, on that Day, the "*eight*" will carry the throne of God above themselves.

In this beautiful and mysterious verse, the Promised One of our time, Bahá', whose abjad value equals the number 9, is above the people of the world (number 8), and they are the bearers and supporters of His teachings.

The prophecy of verse 69:17 is also fulfilled in the design of the shrine of the Báb. The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith created aspects of the design of that shrine according to this prophecy; the shrine, on Mount Carmel, is based on 8 pillars. The dome of the Shrine is a symbol of the station of the Báb Who rules over the entire world. The international Administrative Center of the Bahá'í Faith—the throne of God—is also established upon the same mountain, near the Shrine of the Báb.

The Báb has, also, linked the "Throne of God" to the number 8:

> *There the heavenly angels, eight in number, who carry the Throne of God.*[23] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh has mentioned the above utterance of the Báb in the Kitáb-i-Badí' and translated it from Arabic into Persian:

> *The heavenly angels, eight in number, are carrying the Throne of God.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

And in an interpretation of the utterance states:

> *None is worthy of carrying this Throne save the heavenly angels, who with God's aid, will carry this greatest Trust.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

In the number 9 (the abjad value of Bahá') another mystery is also hidden. 9 is the only number that embodies every single number; and with this maximum "diversity" it still enjoys "unity"; no matter how great the number is, it is still under the shadow of the number 9. These two properties of the number 9 conform to the most important social teaching of the Bahá'í Faith—"Unity in Diversity". All nations, according to this teaching, will benefit in the future from two characteristics:

- They will preserve their national identity
- And will live in perfect unity with other nations

According to the new plan or order of God, diversity will add beauty to the world; on the other hand, the nations of the world will be united by the power of

the "Greatest Name" i.e. "Bahá'"—like a garden with flowers of many kinds and colors growing under the watchful eyes of a gardener and nurturer.

Praiseworthy Names of God

The glorious Qur'án mentions many attributes and Names of God, and teaches us that our Creator possesses "the most beautiful Names":

> There is no God but Him; His are the most beautiful names.* Qur'án 20:8 (tr. 1)
> There is noo God but Him; He is the possessor of the most excellent names. (tr. 2)

> He is the possessor of the most beautiful Names .... He is the Almighty, the Wise.
> Qur'án 59:24

In reference to the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh:

> He Who is the Lord of Revelation shed the full splendour of His Excellent Names upon all creation.[26]
> Shoghi Effendi

Verse 7:180 (see below) speaks of those who alter the praiseworthy and beautiful names of God, i.e. they distort them from their intended meaning.

We have already noted that the Qur'án states many people will deny the promise of the appearance of God ("Presence of God"), and it is clear that such people will also reject the possibility that a human can manifest the attributes and Names of God.

In this age, the sea of God's grace and mercy is swelling to such a degree that it has instantly poured out all its hidden pearls onto the shore; and He has adorned the Promised One of our age, to the greatest extent possible, with all His glorious and beautiful Names. However, the Qur'án states most people will deprive themselves from beholding this radiant Sun, or of hearing this "Great Announcement".

Believers and deniers of the new Faith of God

Qur'án 7:180	God is the possessor of the most beautiful Names; then call Him by them [these Names], and leave those who distort the Names of God to themselves; soon will they receive the consequences of their actions.
Qur'án 7:181	Among those We have created is a nation [ummah] which is guided by Truth whereby they establish justice.
Qur'án 7:182–3	Those who deny our verses, We will entangle them in a way they know not (We will abase them); but We will give them a respite. My plan is firmly established.
Qur'án 7:184	Do they not know that their "Companion" is not crazy? He is but a clear Warner.
Qur'án 7:185	Do they not behold the kingdom of heaven and earth, and whatever God hath created? It may well be that their end is near. Then in what utterance after it [the Qur'án] will they believe?
Qur'án 7:186	Whosoever God alloweth to be misled, will have no guide; they are abandoned in their rebellion.

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* Translation of Majíd Fakhry

There appears to be no immediate relationship between verses 7:180–7Sura; this is a characteristic of the puzzle. Upon further examination it is seen that they all relate to the events of our era, and many mysteries are hidden within them:

1. In the beginning, God speaks of His Beautiful Names, Names that he bestows upon all His Messengers.

> God is the possessor of beautiful names; then call Him by them [those Names].
> Qur'án 7:180

2. Some people will not comprehend the meaning of this bestowal, and they will distort the utterance of God. Among the greatest gifts of God in our era is the dispatch of two great Messengers Named "Lord", i.e. in God's Own Name. Such bounty and great gift of God should be the cause joy and thankfulness; the appearance of two Promised Ones by the Name of the "Most Exalted Lord" (title of the Báb) and "Bahá'u'lláh", "the Greatest Name" of God, has had no precedence in human history. What would be God's judgement regarding those who, instead of gratefulness, rejected the two Messengers, killed the first and imprisoned the second?

> Leave those who distort the Names of God to themselves; soon shall they receive the consequences of their actions. Qur'án 7:180

3. However, among the *ummah* ("nation, group") are those who follow the path of Truth; these people recognize the Promised One of God, and with the help of His teachings establish the foundation of justice in the world.

> Among those We have created is an ummah which is guided by Truth whereby they establish justice. Qur'án 7:181

4. The fate of the deniers of God's Religion is very unpleasant. God leaves them submerged in the whirlpool of their ignorance, but **gives them a respite.** In the end, these deniers will face their gloomy fate, and unaware, they gradually lose their might and power until they are abased.

> Those who consider our verses untrue, we will entangle them [disgrace and abase them] in a way they know not; but we give them a respite. My plan is firmly established. Qur'án 7:182–183

5. The Messengers are the Companions of the people; even though, inwardly, they speak with God's authority, outwardly they are just humans—Messengers Who associate with people with love and humility.

> Do they not know that their "Companion" is not crazy? He is but a clear Warner..
> Qur'án 7:184

In every age, ignorant people have labeled these loving Companions insane. This point clearly demonstrates that by "Companion" the Messenger of God is intended.

What are the responsibilities of these Messengers and these companions? They will never force people to believe in them. They even refuse to perform miracles to satisfy people's demands; although They are capable of

performing any miracle. Their sole responsibility is to clearly warn people that their denial can have terrible consequences; this is Their only responsibility; all these facts tell us the meaning of "Companion" in the above verses.

6. Afterwards, God calls us to meditate and reflect.

> Do they not behold the kingdom of heaven and earth, and whatever God hath created? It may well be that their end is near; then in what utterance [other than the Qur'án] will they believe? Qur'án 7:185

How is it that people do not glance at the kingdoms of heaven and earth to see that the world of existence is in constant motion and revolution? Do they not see that night changes to day and day to night, spring to winter, and winter to spring? Why is it then that they are not warned? Have they not noticed that nations come and go? Have they not read this verse of the Qur'án: "For every ummah there is an end" (Qur'án 7:34)? Is the Muslim *ummah* exempt from this law? If the believers do not accept the testimony of the Qur'án, then whose words do they find worthy of acceptance?

7. Both the beginning of this promise (7:178) and the end of it (7:186) are related to the guidance of God; our spiritual, eternal destiny is in both the hands of God and ourselves. If we play our part, then we will surely enjoy the divine grace and mercy.

> Whosoever God alloweth to be misled, will have no guide; they are abandoned in their rebellion. Qur'án 7:186

Those who are guided or led astray

Before the verses 7:180–186, God reminds us of what it means to be guided or misled:

> Whoever is guided by God is guided, and whoever is misled is of the lost. Qur'án 7:178

God reminds us in the above verse that the gift of faith is in His hand, and will be given only to those who strive to attain it. Then He states:

> We have created many people, both Jinn and man, for the Hell fire. These people have hearts void of understanding; they have eyes but do not see; and they have ears but do not hear; they are a people who are like the beasts, nay even more lost; they are of the heedless. Qur'án 7:179

The above verse speaks of people who are blind in heart and prejudiced. Having seeing eyes and hearing ears are the first requirement for being human; without these prerequisites to attain knowledge and perception, it is like living in the dark, deprived of wisdom and intellect, which are the advantages that humans have over animals.

People who refuse to take advantage of the gifts of God, intellect being chief among them, are, in the sight of God, baser than animals; inasmuch as animal cannot use what it does not have, and man does not use what he has. According to these verses, such people are fit only for Hell, which is a state of being remote

from God. Would it be fair if the blind in heart and bigoted be admitted to Heaven, which is a state of nearness to God?

How astonishing it would be to hear that someone has covered his eyes and ears so that he cannot see or hear! Yet, in the world of the spirit, such behavior is commonplace. How great are the number of people who condemn their soul to the narrow and dark prison of ignorance and negligence, spending all their lives there! God's judgement against these short-sighted people is very harsh; such people, after being freed from the cage of the body, proceed to another cage—remoteness from God.

The great Day of God—a new era in human history

Why has our era been called the "**Day of God**", and the Promised One of our era named "**the Lord**"? Until now, humanity has been in its spiritual childhood. That period has now ended, and a new era of human evolution has begun: a great and unrivalled day, a time when all *Umúr* ("Causes") become one *Amr* ("Cause"), and all *umam* ("nations") become one *ummah* ("nation").

> That Day is when all mankind people will be gathered together, and that day is witnessed. And We will not delay it except for a limited term. Qur'án 11:103–104

This is a victorious Day on which God, with utmost glory and beauty, is established upon the "Throne of might and grandeur":

> *This is the Day in which God hath ascended the Throne of might and grandeur.*[27] Bahá'u'lláh

> Your Lord is He Who .... ascended the Throne .... Qur'án 10:3

> For dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. Psalm 22:28

> The Lord their God will save them on that day .... Zachariah 9:16

After 6,000 years of nurture and growth, the spiritual age of maturity of humanity has begun. We are now at the beginning of this great Day; its glorious dawn has not yet brightened; darkness and light are still blended together. The forces of darkness are still incapable of perceiving the Light of God:

> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it John 1:5

The "Day of God" is a great Day, the like of which the world has not seen:

> A great Day—the Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds. Qur'án 83:5–6

> *By God! That which the former Messengers announced hath indeed appeared, as well as that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'án, exalted be His words: "The Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds".*[28] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is a Day whereon the eyes have been honored by beholding the beauty of the All-Glorious.** [29] Bahá'u'lláh

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* The beauty of the All-Glorious is a reference to the appearance of God's Supreme Manifestation.

This is the Day in which the earth shineth with the effulgent light of thy Lord, but the people are lost in error and have been shut out as by a veil.[30] Bahá'u'lláh

Great and blessed is this Day.[31] Bahá'u'lláh

This is indeed a wondrous and blessed Day! How great is the Day! How mighty the Cause! Yet the people, for the most part, are feeble.[32] Bahá'u'lláh

The following utterance of Bahá'u'lláh informs us that God created us with ears to hear this secret, and eyes were bestowed on us to attain the Presence of His Manifestation. Why then do people flee from this mystery or from attaining this "Presence"?

Ears have been given you that they may hearken unto the mystery of Him Who is the Self-Dependent, and eyes that they may behold Him. Wherefore flee ye? The Incomparable Friend is manifest. He speaketh that wherein lieth salvation.[33] Bahá'u'lláh

The promise of the coming of the Lord, in a way that the lovers of His Presence partake of His Beauty, can be found in many Qur'anic verses:

And your Lord (God) will come accompanied by angers, rank upon rank. Qur'án 89:22

The following verse reveals that the acceptance or rejection of this great Day is in our hands:

(The coming of) That Day is certain; whosoever desires let him choose a path to his Lord. Qur'án 78:39

The following utterance shows, in an elegant manner, the difference between our era and that of former Messengers:

This is the day in which "There is no god but God" hath been replaced by: "There is no God but Me".[34] Bahá'u'lláh

According to the above utterance, a great sign of our era is that while former Messengers used the third person pronoun (He) to refer to God, in this great day and by the leave of God, the two Messengers of the era, in addition to the third person pronoun, use the first person pronoun, I, for the first time.

We shall know God through His Words

O MY servants! This is God's appointed Day which the merciful Lord hath promised you in His Book; wherefore, in very truth, glorify ye abundantly the name of God while treading the Path of the Most Great Remembrance ....[*] [35]

The Báb

O Friends! The Lord Saith: This is not the day of idle talk. Hearken to the Voice of the peerless Friend, and accept that which informeth and liberateth you .... The Faith of God hath appeared and His deeds are manifest. Say: O My servants! The Guide is come. Hasten unto Him. The Peerless Seer hath arrived, showing the straight Path. It beseemeth him who heakeneth to say, with his inner tongue: O my Lord! Thy Call hath revived the world and hath bestowed life upon it. My face is

[*] The Most Great Remembrance is one of the titles of the Báb.

turning to Thee and my soul is eager to meet Thee .... The Lord of the world is come; His Way is unlike other ways, and His Words unlike other words. Hearken and come forth. This blessed Day hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer. This is the Word of God.[36] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: By the righteousness of God! Your lips have tasted a Cup that none hath previously touched. Erelong shall ye know it, if ye be of the patient .... Say: By God! Whosoever drinketh from this cup shall never thirst.[37] Bahá'u'lláh

Say! O people! Arise ye to serve the Cause of God; aid Him, then, and be of those who have arisen for the triumph of His Faith. Know ye that He is independent of all besides Him. That which He enjoineth upon people, is as a token of His gracious favour unto them; so that thereby they may draw near to the court of His presence in the most exalted Paradise.[38] Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of God! I lay asleep when the breezes of Revelation stirred Me up. I was silent; thy Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, caused Me to speak forth. Were it not at His command, I would not have manifested Myself. His Will encompassed My will, and raised Me up in His Cause; for this, there rained down upon Me the darts of the infidels. Peruse that which We have revealed unto the kings that thou mayest be assured that this Vassal speaketh as He hath been bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed; and that thou mayest testify that His tribulations have not withheld Him from mentioning Him Who is the Lord of all Names. Though Himself a prisoner, He hath summoned each and all to God, and the ascendency of the oppressor hath never alarmed Him.[39] Bahá'u'lláh

By God! This is not of Me

All the Manifestations have testified that God is the Speaker, not them:

Lauded be Thy name, O my God! Thou seest how I have been sorely vexed among Thy servants, and beholdest the things that have befallen me in Thy path. Thou knowest full well that I have not spoken a word but by Thy leave, that my lips have never been opened except at Thy bidding and in accordance with Thy pleasure, that every breath I have breathed hath been animated with Thy praise and Thy remembrance, that I have summoned all men to naught else except that whereunto Thy chosen ones have through all eternity been summoned, and that I have bidden them observe only the things that would draw them nearer unto the Day-Spring of Thy loving-kindness, and the Dawning-Place of Thy favors, and the Horizon of Thy riches, and the Manifestation of Thine inspiration and Thy revelation.

Thou art well aware, O my God, that I have not failed in my duty towards Thy Cause. At all times and under all conditions I have wafted, in every direction, the breezes of Thine inspiration, and shed abroad the sweet smell of the raiment of Thy mercy, that haply Thy servants may discover its fragrance, and through it be enabled to turn towards Thee.

I implore Thee, O my God, by the Lights of Thy unity and the Repositories of Thy revelation, to send down from the clouds of Thy mercy that which will cleanse the hearts of all such as have turned towards Thee. Blot out, then, from their hearts all that may induce Thy servants to cavil at Thy Cause.

Thy will hath overruled my will, O my God, and I have shown forth what hath grievously vexed me. Have mercy, then, upon me, O Thou Who of all those who show mercy art the Most Merciful![40] Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of God! This is not from Me, but what God hath diisclosed unto My soul.[41] Bahá'u'lláh

Say .... O people! These are the verses of God that have been sent down through the power of truth ... By God! These are not from Me; nay, rather, they proceed from the Almighty, the Beloved. Verily, I am a Servant Who hath believed in God and in His signs; I have no control over Mine own movement or stillness ... Everytime I am still and hold My peace, and cease to make mention of Thee, the Holy Spirit causeth Me arise and to proclaim the Cause betwixt the heavens and the earth; this is not from Me but from God, if ye be of them that comprehend.[42] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by Thy glory, O my God! I desire naught for Myself save that which Thou hast chosen for Me; and wish to utter only what Thou hast commanded Me to utter.[43] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by God! I speak not from mere impulse, but the voice of the Spirit is raised within My Soul. This is not from Me, but from Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Powerful.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

I can utter no word, O my God, unless I be permitted by Thee, and can move in no direction until I obtain Thy sanction. It is Thou, O my God, Who hast called me into being through the power of Thy might, and hast endued me with Thy grace to manifest Thy Cause.[45] Bahá'u'lláh

We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth.[46] The Báb

All the limbs and members of my body proclaim their readiness to be torn asunder in Thy path and for the sake of Thy pleasure, and they yearn to be scattered in the dust before Thee. O would that they who serve Thee could taste what I have tasted of the sweetness of Thy love! .... Thou art, verily, the Omniscient, the All-Glorious, the Almighty.[47] Bahá'u'lláh

Every time I hold my peace, and cease to extol Thy wondrous virtues, Thy Spirit impelleth me to cry out before all who are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth; and every time I am still, the breaths wafted from the right hand of Thy will and purpose pass over me, and stir me up, and I find myself to be as a leaf which lieth at the mercy of the winds of Thy decree, and is carried away whithersoever Thou dost permit or command it.[48] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou Who art the Beloved of my soul and the Fountain of my life! I am persuaded of my powerlessness to describe and extol Thee in a manner that becometh the greatness of Thy glory and the excellence of Thy majesty.[49] Bahá'u'lláh

Loving conversation of the Manifestation with God

The prayers of the Messengers of God manifest to us Their inner desires, and Their love and servitude towards God. We can only know Them through Their conversations with God; we can find the most beautiful descriptions of God in the Writings of the two Promised Onesof our time. How totally unmatched by any other description is the praise that these two Messengers have offered their Creator!

Examples of prayers by Bahá'u'lláh

Lauded be Thy name, O my God! I testify that no thought of Thee, howsoever wondrous, can ever ascend into the heaven of Thy knowledge, and no praise of Thee, no matter how transcendent, can soar up to the atmosphere of Thy wisdom. From eternity Thou hast been removed far above the reach and the ken of the comprehension of Thy servants, and immeasurably exalted above the strivings of Thy bondslaves to express Thy mystery. What power can the shadowy creature claim to possess when face to face with Him Who is the Uncreated?

I bear witness that the highest thoughts of all such as adore Thy unity, and the profoundest contemplations of all them that have recognized Thee, are but the product of what hath been generated through the movement of the Pen of Thy behest, and hath been begotten by Thy will. I swear by Thy glory, O Thou Who art the Beloved of my soul and the Fountain of my life! I am persuaded of my powerlessness to describe and extol Thee in a manner that becometh the greatness of Thy glory and the excellence of Thy majesty.[50] Bahá'u'lláh

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! Thou seest and knowest that I have called upon Thy servants to turn nowhere except in the direction of Thy bestowals, and have bidden them observe naught save the things Thou didst prescribe in Thy Perspicuous Book, the Book which hath been sent down according to Thine inscrutable decree and irrevocable purpose.

I can utter no word, O my God, unless I be permitted by Thee, and can move in no direction until I obtain Thy sanction. It is Thou, O my God, Who hast called me into being through the power of Thy might, and hast endued me with Thy grace to manifest Thy Cause. Wherefore I have been subjected to such adversities that my tongue hath been hindered from extolling Thee and from magnifying Thy glory.

All praise be to Thee, O my God, for the things Thou didst ordain for me through Thy decree and by the power of Thy sovereignty. I beseech Thee that Thou wilt fortify both myself and them that love me in our love for Thee, and wilt keep us firm in Thy Cause. I swear by Thy might! O my God! Thy servant's shame is to be shut out as by a veil from Thee, and his glory is to know Thee. Armed with the power of Thy name nothing can ever hurt me, and with Thy love in my heart all the world's afflictions can in no wise alarm me.

Send down, therefore, O my Lord, upon me and upon my loved ones that which will protect us from the mischief of those that have repudiated Thy truth and disbelieved in Thy signs.

Thou art, verily, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful.[51] Bahá'u'lláh

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Thou beholdest my low estate and the habitation wherein I dwell, and bearest witness unto my perplexity, my crying needs, my troubles, and the afflictions I suffer among Thy servants who recite Thy verses and repudiate their Revealer, who call on Thy names and cavil at their Creator, who seek to draw nigh unto Him Who is Thy Friend and put to death Him Who is the Best-Beloved of the worlds.

Open Thou their eyes, O my God, and My Master, that they may gaze on Thy beauty, or cause them to return unto the lowest abyss of the fire. Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest. Thou art, verily, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

The glory of Thy might, O my God, beareth me witness! Every time I attempt to remember Thee, I find myself overpowered by the sublimity of Thy station and the immensity of Thy might; and every time I hold my peace, lo, I am impelled by my love for Thee and by the potency of Thy will, to unloose my tongue and mention Thee. He who is poor and needy, O my God, is calling for his Lord, the All-Possessing; and he who is destitute of all strength remembereth his Master, the All-Powerful. If He deign to accept His servant's supplication, He is, verily, of unsurpassed bounteousness; and if He cast him out, He is of those who judge equitably the best. He indeed is acceptable, O my God, who hath set his face towards Thee, and he is truly deprived who hath been careless of the remembrance of Thee in Thy days. Blessed is he that hath tasted of the sweetness of Thy remembrance and praise. Nothing, not even the arising of all the peoples of the whole world to assail him, can hinder such a man from directing his steps towards the paths of Thy pleasure and the ways of Thy Cause.

Look, then, O Thou Who art the Well-Beloved of Bahá, upon the tears he sheddeth before Thee, and behold the sighs which he uttereth, O Thou Who art his heart's Desire! I swear by Thy might, and Thy majesty and Thy glory! Were I to inherit from Thee all the delights of Paradise, and to keep them in my possession as long as Thine own Being endureth, and were I to become, for less than a moment, careless of the remembrance of Thee, I would, of a certainty, cast them away from me and cease to consider them. I am the one, O my God, who for love of Thee hath forsaken the world and all its benefits, and willingly accepted every tribulation for the sake of Thy remembrance.

I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. No God is there beside Thee, the Most Exalted, the Self-Sufficing, the Self-Exalting, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

Praise be unto Thee, for Thou art, in truth, the Lord of earth and heaven.[52] Bahá'u'lláh

All-praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God! I know not how to sing Thy praise, how to describe Thy glory, how to call upon Thy Name. If I call upon Thee by Thy Name, the All-Possessing, I am compelled to recognize that He Who holdeth in His hand the immediate destinies of all created things is but a vassal dependent upon Thee, and is the creation of but a word proceeding from Thy mouth. And if I proclaim Thee by the name of Him Who is the All-Compelling, I readily discover that He is but a suppliant fallen upon the dust, awe-stricken by Thy dreadful might, Thy sovereignty and power. And if I attempt to describe Thee by glorifying the oneness of Thy Being, I soon realize that such a conception is but a notion which mine own fancy hath woven, and that Thou hast ever been immeasurably exalted above the vain imaginations which the hearts of men have devised.

The glory of Thy might beareth me witness! Whoso claimeth to have known Thee hath, by virtue of such a claim, testified to his own ignorance; and whoso believeth himself to have attained unto Thee, all the atoms of the earth would attest his powerlessness and proclaim his failure. Thou hast, however, by virtue of Thy mercy that hath surpassed the kingdoms of earth and heaven, deigned to accept from Thy servants the laud and honor they pay to Thine own exalted Self, and hast bidden them celebrate Thy glory, that the ensigns of Thy guidance may be unfurled in Thy cities and the tokens of Thy mercy be spread abroad among Thy nations, and that

each and all may be enabled to attain unto that which Thou hast destined for them by Thy decree, and ordained unto them through Thine irrevocable will and purpose.

Having testified, therefore, unto mine own impotence and the impotence of Thy servants, I beseech Thee, by the brightness of the light of Thy beauty, not to refuse Thy creatures attainment to the shores of Thy most holy ocean. Draw them, then, O my God, through the Divine sweetness of Thy melodies, towards the throne of Thy glory and the seat of Thine eternal holiness. Thou art, verily, the Most Powerful, the Supreme Ruler, the Great Giver, the Most Exalted, the Ever-Desired.

Grant, then, O my God, that Thy servant who hath turned towards Thee, hath fixed his gaze upon Thee, and clung to the cord of Thy mercifulness and favor, may be enabled to partake of the living waters of Thy mercy and grace. Cause him, then, to ascend unto the heights to which he aspireth, and withhold him not from that which Thou dost possess. Thou art, verily, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.[53] Bahá'u'lláh

Thou art, verily, the Lord of Bahá, and the Beloved of his heart, and the Object of his desire, and the Inspirer of his tongue, and the Source of his soul.[54] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 82.
2 Risáliy-i-Ayyám-i-Tis'ih, p. 345. (prov. tr.)
3 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 320. (prov. tr.)
4 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 320. (prov. tr.)
5 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 244 (no. CXV)
6 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 291. (prov. tr.)
7 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 250. (prov. tr.)
8 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
9 Mafátíḥ'uj-Janán, p. 487, and Faraḥtu'l-ghará, translated by Allámih Majlisí, p. 93.
10 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 88. (prov. tr.)
11 Selections from the Writings of The Báb, p 113
12 Amr-va-Khalq, vol. 1, p. 151. (prov. tr.)
13 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 45 (no. XVIII)
14 The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 85.
15 Majmú'iy-i-Munáját, Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, volume 1, p. 42. (prov. tr.)
16 **Source is not given**
17 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 56.
18 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 79. (prov. tr.)
19 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáh-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 160–161. (prov. tr.)
20 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
21 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 110. (prov. tr.)
22 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, volume 4, p. 198. (prov. tr.)
23 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 224. (prov. tr.)
24 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 325. (prov. tr.)
25 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 325. (prov. tr.)
26 Tawqí'át-i-Mubárakeh Khatáb bi Aḥibbá'-i-Sharq, p. 146. (prov. tr.)
27 Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'la, vol. 1, p. 377. (prov. tr.)
28 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 250. (prov. tr.)
29 Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 215. (prov. tr.)
30 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 244.
31 Tablets of Bahá'u'iláh, p. 220.
32 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 93. (prov. tr.)
33 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 58 (gr. 3.4)

34 This quote attributed to Bahá'u'lláh; source is not given. (prov. tr.)
35 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 72.
36 Yárán-i-Pársí, pp. 15–16. (prov. tr.)
37 Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'la, vol. 4, p. 27. (prov. tr.)
38 Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'la, vol. 4, p. 122. (prov. tr.)
39 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 233–234. (prov. tr.)
40 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 202–203 (no. CXIX)
41 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 20. (prov. tr.)
42 Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'la, vol. 4, pp. 79–80. (prov. tr.)
43 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 227. (prov. tr.)
44 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 46. (prov. tr.)
45 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 208 (no. CXXII)
46 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 57.
47 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 151–152 (no. XC)
48 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 306–307 (no. CLXXIX)
49 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 149 (no. LXXXVIII)
50 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 149 (no. LXXXVIII)
51 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 207–208 (no. CXXII)
52 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 204–206 (no. CXX)
53 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 123–124 (no. LXXV)
54 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 109 (no. LXVI)

15
Bahá'u'lláh: The Light of God

Glory and grandeur of God

The earth will shine with the Light of her God. Qur'án 39:69

This is the Day in which the earth shineth with the effulgent light of thy Lord, but the people are lost in error and have been shut out as by a veil.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

According to a ḥadíth attributed to Imám Ṣádiq:

When the Qá'im riseth, the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord.[2]

When our Qá'im riseth, the earth shall shine with the light of your Lord.[3]

Were the children of men to gaze with the eye of understanding, they would see the world illumined with a new light in this day.[4] Bahá'u'lláh

"Light" in divine Scriptures

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Psalm 27:1

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Jesus (John 8:12)

God guideth, by His Light, whom He pleaseth.[5] The Báb

Sura 24 an-Núr ("Light") provides clues to the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án. In that sura, God calls on us to reflect on His verses:

Thus God makes the verses clear for you that you may understand.
Qur'án 24:61

The word "light" has been used often in divine Scriptures:

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Jesus (John 9:5)

The light shines in darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.
Jesus (John 1:5)

God is the Guardian of the believers; He leads them out of darkness into light.
Qur'án 2:257

There has come to you a Light and a clear Book from God. Qur'án 5:15, 14:1

Fain would they put out God's light with their mouth. But God has willed to perfect His light. Qur'án 9:32

In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh refers to a poem by Rúmí, which states "These clumps of dirt intend to cover Your Sun with their envy". Bahá'u'lláh responds with the following words:

... give the people the joyful tidings concerning this resplendent Light whose revelation hath been announced by God through His Prophets and Messengers.[6]
Bahá'u'lláh

> Verily, there has come to you a Light and a clear Book from God. Through it God guides those who seek His good-pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out of the darkness into the light by His leave, and guides them to the Straight Path. Qur'án 5:15–16, (See also Qur'án 14:1)

> *O PEOPLES of the earth! Verily the resplendent Light of God hath appeared in your midst, invested with this unerring Book, that ye may be guided aright to the ways of peace and, by the leave of God, step out of the darkness into the light and onto this far-extended Path of Truth ....*[7] The Báb

The Qur'án calls God the Light of earth and heaven:

> God is the Light of the Heavens and the earth .... God will guide to His light whom He wills. Qur'án 24:35

In many of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh likens His Revelation to the rising of the sun:

> *O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which, in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime, are being showered upon you. The Day Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O My servants! Debar not yourselves from the Ocean of knowledge, and deprive not yourselves from the Sun of vision. The exhilarating breezes have wafted, bestowing freshness upon the dispirited .... Happy is the servant who recognizeth the value of this Day, and testifieth to its greatness.*[9] Bahá'u'lláh

In many of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh invites us to remove, with the aid of our creator, the "veils" from our eyes and ears, if we desire to see the Light and the "Sun of Wisdom" of God, and hear His exhilarating melodies:

> *Blessed the man who hath sought enlightenment from the Day-Star of My Word. ... Blessed is he that hath been enraptured by My wondrous melodies and hath rent the veils asunder through the potency of My might.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

Until we free ourselves from "vain imaginings and idle fancies", we will never see the Sun of certitude:

> *How can those who have, for ages and centuries, been reared with idle fancies and vain imaginings, be worthy of beholding the rays of the Sun of certitude?*[11] Bahá'u'lláh

Just as the life and health of our body is dependent upon the sun, the life and health of our spirit is dependent upon the Light of God. The Messengers are intermediaries for this bounty; and in their Spirit They have only this Light, which is the Revelation of God.

> Say! I am a man like you Who receives Revelation. Qur'án 18:110

Sura 24 an-Núr ("Light")

In chapter 10, we studied the following verse of Sura 18 the Cave:

> And thou mightest have seen the sun when it arose ... this is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God Guideth... Qur'án 18:17

In His book the Four Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh connects the above verse to Sura 24 The Light, (Qur'án 24:37):

> *If a man could know what lieth hid in this one verse, it would suffice him. Wherefore, in praise of such as these, He hath said: "Men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God ...."*[12]

Let us see what connection the sun (Sura 18 The Cave) has with the Light (Sura 24 The Light). One of the most beautiful, most mysterious, most challenging, and best known verses of the Qur'án (24:35) shines as a brilliant jewel in Sura 24 The Light. Muslim interpreters have spoken, many times, about the interpretation and explanation of this allegorical verse; albeit they have not discerned its essential mystery. Only through the revelation of the two Promised Onesof our age the mysteries hidden in the verse have been disclosed. It is impossible to translate this beautiful verse into any language; however, we need to translate it for an English reader to comprehend its hidden meanings:

1. Word by word meaning of verse 24:35:

> God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche in it "a lamp [and] the lamp" is enclosed in a "glass [and] the glass" appears as if it were a shining star; it is lighted from a blessed olive tree, not of East and not of West; Its oil would almost give light, although no fire has touched it. [It is] light upon light. God will guide to His light whom He wills; and God sets forth parables for mankind; and God is the knower of all things.

2. The meaning of verse 24:35 based on its contents:

> God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The appearance of His illumination in the world is like a chamber in which there are two lights radiating from two glass covers. These two lights appear like a brilliant star; the source of the illumination for this star is an "olive tree" that God has blessed—a tree that illuminates the whole world; it is as though its oil is enflamed without contact with fire. It is light upon light. God shall guide whom He desires to the straight path; and He teaches the people with parables and simile; He is informed of all things.

Let us see what mysteries are hidden in this beautiful and profound verse and related verses

God is the light of the heavens and the earth.	In these words, our Creator is likened to light; just as our physical being is dependent on the light of the sun, our spiritual being is dependent on the light of God.
His light is like a niche	These words bring the light and illumination from the arena of heaven to earth; instead of talking about heaven and the sun, they mention a niche and a lamp.

One of the meanings of "niche" is a world in which the followers of a religion live. Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *"When the light of the Qur'anic Revelation was kindled within the chamber of Muḥammad's holy heart ...."*[13]

In that niche, there are lamp [and] lamp.

By lamp is meant the light of the lamp, not its glass or wick; the repeat of "lamp" is a reference to two "lights" or radiances. In the physical world, the sun and the moon provide the light; in the spiritual world of our era, we also have two light-givers and two religions whose lights are blended together. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, each is an independent Messenger; together, like two lighted lamps, bestow a more intense illumination on the world than one lamp.

We can translate Bahá'í as "illuminated". Bahá' has many meanings; one of which is "light". The Revelation of John 21:23 refers to the Báb as a "lamp". The Báb alluded to Qur'án 24:35 when He likened Himself to a "lamp" or a "niche":

> *I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendour.*[14]

Isaiah 60:2 and the Book of Revelation 21:23 both speak of the Bahá'í Revelation in terms of light and light-giver, and use the name Bahá'u'lláh:

> Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord (Bahá'u'lláh) has risen upon you. Isaiah 60:2

> The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God (Bahá'u'lláh) gives it light. Revelation 21:23

[These two lights] are in two glasses (shine through two glasses).

This world consists of both the physical and the spiritual worlds. To have a relationship with the light of God, we need a "glass". What does "glass" signify? Glass is the vehicle that transmits the light. The light of God reaches us through His Messengers and through His Religion. In this blessed era, there are two lamps or lights within two glasses, i.e. two Promised Ones and two Religions have been manifested. The repetition of the word "glass", like the repeat of the word "lamp", alludes to two independent religions and two Promised Ones of our era. These two lamps and two glasses are so close to one another that even the word "and", which connects the two lamps and two glasses, is omitted.

It is as though the (two illuminated lamps) is like a shining star.

These words refer to the unity of the two Religions, and their two Founders; They are likened to a single shining star. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have only one objective—to establish a religion that illuminates the entire world with the light of faith, unity, peace and purity.

Comparing these two Promised Ones and their Religion to a star hints at the greatness of this Day, and the intensity of the light of these two Promised Ones. (The stars we see at night are much larger and brighter than the star of our solar system, i.e. the sun; their distance from us prevents us from seeing the full intensity of their light.

[A star that] is aglow from a blessed Olive Tree.

Once again, these words bring us back to the world of plants and trees. Where does the light of this Star come from? From an olive tree that is blessed. "Olive Tree" alludes to the "Most Great Spirit" of God, which is the Source of all light in the world of being. All beings are born of this "Spirit"; the "Most Great Spirit" has been and is radiant in all the Messengers of God. According to an English encyclopedia, "oil" mentioned in the heavenly Scriptures denotes the "Spirit of God".*

Just as the fruit of the olive tree is a source of oil, which gives us light, the words of the Messengers also contain oil (oil of wisdom, understanding and faith) that bestows spiritual or eternal life. Spiritual life is impossible without that oil. Whatever has existed and does now exist, exists through the Word of God, which is the vehicle of transmission of the "oil of wisdom, understanding and faith".

> *This is the blessed Tree ablaze by the oil of servitude ....*[15]

Bahá'u'lláh has used the words "lamp", "glass" and "oil" in some of His Writings:

> *O God, my God! Thou hast lighted the lamp of Thy Cause with the oil of wisdom; protect it from contrary winds. The lamp is Thine, and the glass is Thine, and all things in the heavens and on earth are in the grasp of Thy power.*[16]
>
> *Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. Feed it with the oil of Divine*

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* "Of the numerous substances, animals and vegetables, that were known to the ancients as yielding oil, the olive berry is the one the Scriptures mention most frequently. ...

"Oil was a fitting symbol of the Spirit or spiritual principle of life, by virtue of its power to sustain and fortify the vital energy; and the anointing oil, which was prepared according to divine instructions, was therefore **a symbol of the Spirit of God, as the principle of spiritual life that proceeds from God** and fills the natural being of the creature with the powers of divine life. Anointing with oil, therefore, was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God for the duties of the office to which a person was consecrated (Lev. 8:12; 1 Sam. 10:1, 6; 16:13–14; Isa. 61:1)." *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1279 & 1281.

Olive tree and olive oil and its light have been connected to Mount Sinai:

A tree growing on Mount Sinai, which produces oil .... Qur'án 23:20

guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy. Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God ....[17]

The Words are even as a niche, the love of God and His remembrance as the lamp.[18]

Jesus also uses **oil as a symbol of wisdom and faith.** See the story of the five foolish girls and the five wise girls at the end of this chapter.

In the heavenly Books, the word "tree" has been used to signify the Word of God, or the Manifestation of God.* Bahá'u'lláh sometimes refers to Himself as the "Tree", and at other times as "Sadratu'l-Muntahá", i.e. the Tree that is at the limit of contact between God and His Messengers.

A tree neither of the East nor of the West (it is for all the peoples of the world).

In the Book of Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', the Báb also uses the same terminology:

He it is from the clouds of Whose power these verses have been revealed, out of the Olive Tree which is neither of the East nor of the West.[19]

'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the same passage from Qur'án 24:35:

The Blessed Tree from which this Call was heard: O Moses, you are in the Sacred Vale of Ṭuwá, and the Fire of truth appeared in that Olive Tree which was neither of the East nor of the West ....[20]

The Bahá'í Faith is neither from the East nor from the West. The two Promised Onesof our era have appeared to proclaim and establish unity among all the people of the world; such a goal and purpose was not possible in the past; in our era, for the first time, the East and the West have been interconnected.

The following verse of the Qur'án demonstrates that, in our era, the light of God spreads over the entire world:

> And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord. Qur'án 39:69

A ḥadíth similar to the above verse can be found:

Just as the world was filled with oppression and injustice, Mahdí will fill it with justice. ... Even if only one day remains of the life of the world, God will lengthen that day, so that, on that day, My son Mahdí appears on that day; then Jesus, the son of Mary, shall descend from Heaven, stand in prayer behind Him; **the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and His**

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* *Do you not know that God uses simile? A pure word is as a tree whose root is established, and its branches reaches high as the heavens, and its fruits produced by the leave of God. God uses simile for the people, perchance they may be warned.*
Qur'án 14:24–25

sovereignty reach the East and the West.*

The Imams of Islám have also related the illumination of the earth to the appearance of the two Promised Onesof our era. Imám Ṣádiq states:

> When the Qá'im riseth the earth will be illumined with the light of its Lord.[21]
>
> When our Qá'im riseth the earth will be illumined with the light of its Lord.[22]
>
> *This is the Day in which the earth shineth with the effulgent light of thy Lord, but the people are lost in error and have been shut out as by a veil.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *Now when the light of God's everlasting Morn is breaking; when the radiance of His holy words: "God is the light of the heavens and of the earth" is shedding illumination upon all mankind;*[24]
>
> *The Divine Lote-Tree ... hath been planted ... and the call of "the earth is illumined with the light of its Lord" hath been raised in every direction .... Yet we are still despondent and depressed .... What are we waiting for, and for what age do we wish that we may flap our wings and fly ... and begin to play and dance?*[25] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Its oil is about to give light, although no fire has touched it.

These words allude to the purity and elegance of the Source of light; the oil, which is the Source of light, is so pure and delicate that is has no need of a fire; it is self-lit.

> *This divine Fire burneth of itself, with neither fuel nor fume, that it might ... lead the entire creation to the court of the presence of the All-Merciful. Whoso hath approached this Fire hath been set aflame and attained the desired goal, and whoso hath removed himself therefrom hath remained deprived.*[26] Bahá'u'lláh

It is light upon light.

These words, once again, inform us that God's light appears twice. In the Heaven of this Revelation two

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* www.hawzah.net/Hawzah/Magazines/MagArt.aspx?MagazineNumberID=5-11&id=43855
Bahá'u'lláh (Who was the Return of Christ) was manifested from the Heaven of the Will of God. The Báb—the promised Mahdi—considered Himself a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and even sacrificed His life for Him.
"**Just as the world was filled with oppression and injustice, Mihdí will make it full of justice.**" Sin was spread gradually. According to the story of creation, Adam and Eve were, in the beginning, sinless. Gradually, people became used to sin. The Bahá'í Faith, according to its New Order, will gradually guide the world to peace and virtue—to an age when the inhabitants of the world consider each other as "the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch".

Suns will shine together. The expression "light upon light" is used when a joyful event is twice as great as expected. What event could be greater and more joyful than when two great and independent Messengers appear at the same time, and bestow a great intensity of light upon the world?

In the beginning, the verse hints of two "lights"; then alludes to the unity of the two. This part of the verse, in a delicate and elegant way, refers both to the independence of the two Lights and their unity.

The following verse of the Psalms of David also alludes to two Lights:

> For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalm 36:9

God will guide to His light whom He pleaseth. 24:35

These words teach us that the simile of "light, illumination, glass, and niche" are related to the recognition of the promise One. In what way do people most need the light of God's guidance? The denial of all the Messengers by people proves the existence of this need.

Immediately after mentioning "the light of guidance", the Qur'án speaks of the "House of Worship". A house that is illumined by this "light".

[The shining of this light] *is in houses* [of worship] *that will be raised, by the leave of God that His name be mentioned there, and His praise be celebrated day and night.* 24:36

In Islám, a place of worship has a special name. In this verse "houses of worship" is used instead of "mosques". Besides, this verse refers to a future time identified with the use of three verbs (will be raised, will be mentioned, will be praised). The place of worship for Bahá'ís is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár ("House of Worship").

Such men [worship in these houses of worship] *whom neither merchandise nor traffic* [affairs of the world] *beguile from the remembrance of God.* 24:37

Here the "Remembrance of God" has two different meanings. It is a reference to the mention of God and alludes to the Báb since one of His titles is the "Remembrance of God". Therefore, the word "men" is a reference to those Muslims who are able to recognize the "Remembrance of God", and to those Muslims who have known Him and are worshipping in His temple.

[The believers who] *perform the prayer, pay the alms, and have fear of the day in which hearts and eyes are transformed.* 24:37

These words are about those faithful and pure-hearted Muslims who have the capacity to recognize the new Faith of God. In this part of the verse, also, two present tense verbs have been used. The meaning of "a day when eyes and hearts are transformed" is the Day of Resurrection. The Day of Resurrection is the day of the Return of the Qá'im. (This topic will be discussed in detail in chapter 20). That Day is a different day; inasmuch as the recognition of the Promised One is difficult for many people because of their prejudices. It is also a difficult day for the believers in the Báb, because they must recognize Bahá'u'lláh.

God will reward such people based on their best

At the time of the appearance of the Messengers, God's

actions and bestows His bounty on them; and God nourishes, abundantly, whom he will. 24:38

grace to those who recognize the new Religion is boundless. Only such courageous and pure-hearted people, who are scarce in that era, have access to such infinite grace.

Those who deny the truth, their actions are like a mirage in a sand-filled desert which the thirsty imagines to be water, but when approaches it, finds nothing, except God's reckoning. God is swift in reckoning. 24:39

This verse is also related to the future, and speaks of denial. Who else but the Promised One can people deny? Bahá'u'lláh confirms this verse of the Qur'án in the first paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas:

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed.[27]

[The state of the deniers] *is as endless darkness in a fathomless ocean in which waves are continuously in motion; and above the ocean are layers of dark clouds; (so dark that) if someone raises his hand, he could hardly see it. For whomever God does not provide a light, then not forhim is* [there]*any light.* 24:40

Just as life for the believers is "light upon light", the life of the deniers is "darkness upon darkness"; it is clearly dreadful to live under such conditions.

These words conclude the discussion of "light" and remind us of the conclusion of the previous verses. Whoever has the capacity and has made the effort to deserve the right to recognize "Bahá'u'lláh" or "Light of God", God allows him to know this "Light"; otherwise, he will be deprived of the Light.

Shoghi Effendi, who was the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, called the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel, the Kúh-i-Núr ("**Mountain of Light**"), and the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh near 'Akká, is the Daryáy-i-Núr ("**Sea of Light**").*[28] Bahá'u'lláh, Who is the "**Light of God**", came out of Núr (the "City of Light" in Mazandaran Province), His Shrine is at Bahjí ("Light"), and He illumined the world of being.

> The earth was illumined with the Light of its Lord. Qur'án 39:69

The name Bahá'u'lláh can be translated as the "Light of God". Hence, we can translate the above verse as:

> The earth was illumined by Bahá'u'lláh.

Since in the sight of God the future is as the past, in many verses the past tense is used instead of the present or the future. The above verse can be translated as:

> The earth will be illumined by Bahá'u'lláh.

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* Also the names of two of the world's largest diamonds (both from India).

In his English translation of the Qur'án, Yúsuf 'Alí, the translator and interpreter trusted by the religious leaders of Saudi Arabia, used "glory" (Bahá') instead of "light":

> And the Earth will shine with the glory of the Lord.*

The same announcement is made in the Bible:

> ... the earth was illumined with his glory. Revelation 18:1

Bahá'u'lláh

This joyous announcement—i.e., about the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and the illumination of the world of being with the glory and grandeur of God—has been repeated many times in the sacred Scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Eighteen examples will be presented below.

As previously mentioned, **Bahá'** has various meanings. Two of its principle meanings are "light" and "splendour". In announcing the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, the Qur'án uses the word "light", and the Bible uses "glory" and "splendour". The following examples demonstrate how clearly and explicitly the title **Bahá'u'lláh** has been prophesied in the Bible:

> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14 NIV†

> And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. Isaiah 40:5, 60:2

> ... the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth. Numbers 14:21 NIV

> ... The Holy City ... shone with the glory of God .... Revelation 21:10–11 NIV

> The city does not need the sun or the moon ... for the glory of God gives it light .... Revelation 21:23

> And I ... am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. Isaiah 66:18 NIV

> I will display my glory [Glory of God] among the nations ... I will no longer hide my face from them .... Ezekiel 39:21, 29 NIV

> ... they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Isaiah 35:2 NIV

> ... "the desire of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory" says the Lord Almighty. Haggai 2:7 NIV

> ... at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne .... Matt 19:28 NIV

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* In explaining the above verse Yúsuf 'Ali writes: It will be a new Earth. All traces of injustice or inequality, darkness or evil, will have gone. There will be the one universal Light, the Glory of Allah, which will now illuminate all. Falsehood, pretense and illusion will have disappeared. Everything will be seen in its true light. The Meaning of the Holy Qur'án, p. 1200.

† New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, currently the bestselling translation of the Bible for Protestant Christians.

> When the Son of Man comes in His glory .... Matt 25:31 NIV
>
> For the Lord shall ... appear in His glory. Psalm 102:16 NIV
>
> O God ... let your glory be over all the earth. Psalm 57:5 NIV
>
> Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Psalm 72:19

In the following utterance, God teaches us that, in order to see the glory and splendor of God, we must have true faith:

> Did I not tell you that if you have faith you will see the glory of God?
> Christ (John 11:40 NEB)

The expression "Light of God", meaning Bahá'u'lláh, has been used in the following quotes:

> ... let us walk in the "light of the Lord". Isaiah 2:5
>
> The following verses from Isaiah, use both meanings of "Bahá"—Light and Glory:
>
> Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Isaiah 60:1–3 NIV

One title of Bahá'u'lláh is the "Blessed Beauty". Bahá'ís often use the abbreviated form of the title; for example, they say: "the Blessed utterance". This title is used in the Bible:

> All nations ... will call him "blessed". Psalm 72:17 NIV

Obstacles to seeing the Light

As previously noted, Bahá'u'lláh relates verse 18:17 of Sura The Cave, which talks about the "sun", to Sura 24 an-Núr ("The Light") Qur'án 24:35, 40. Both refer to the sun, light and to the guidance of God:

> And thou mightest have seen the sun when it arose .... . Guided indeed is he whom God guideth ... Qur'án 18:17
>
> God is the Light of heavens and earth .... God guideth whomever He desireth to His Light. Qur'án 24:35, 40

In the following utterance from *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh uses the same symbols and terminologies of Sura 18 "The Cave" and Sura 24 "The Light" (namely, sun, guided, lamp and niche):

> *The generality of the people, owing to their failure to grasp the meaning of these words, rejected and despised the person of the Manifestation, deprived themselves of the light of His divine guidance, and refused to follow the example of that immortal Beauty.*
>
> *When the light of Qur'anic Revelation was kindled within the chamber of Muḥammad's holy heart, He passed upon the people the verdict of the Last Day, the verdict of resurrection, of judgment, of life, and of death. Thereupon the standards of revolt were hoisted, and the doors of derision opened.*[29]

The light of God is shining in the spirit of man:

> *Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee.*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

The Sun of power and grandeur of God shines with great intensity in the Spirit of the Manifestations. However, Their bodies, like clouds, cover the radiance:

> They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of sky. Matthew 24:30
>
> He was robed in a cloud .... His face was like the sun .... Revelation 10:1
>
> I will come like a thief (under cover). Revelation 3:3
>
> *Were I to remove the veil, all would recognize Me as their Best Beloved, and no one would deny Me.*[31] The Báb
>
> *I have concealed the light of My beauty; outwardly it may appear as darkness, but inwardly it is light upon light, a Light above every other light.*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

Idle fancies, baseless and crude imaginings are other veils that prevent people from seeing the radiance and splendor of the Sun of power and the grandeur of God:

> *Rend thou asunder the veils of idle fancies and vain imaginings, that thou mayest behold the Daystar of knowledge shining from this resplendent Horizon.*[33]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Our worthiness and merit before God are dependent upon the purity of our spirit and heart, not our rank and wealth. Our duty is to beg for the gift of faith; to bestow it is in God's hands. No power can remove the veil of negligence, idle fancy and vain imaginings, but our desire for guidance and the Will of God. No religious leader has any influence in the court of God; leaders of religion, like other people, have dominance only over their own hearts; as long as the veils of sin, vain imagining and idle fancies remain in place, the light of knowledge can never enter our souls. We must continually seek God's assistance to remove these common veils, and we must be certain that this is only possible with the help of God:

> *Vouchsafe Thy strength, O Almighty One, unto Thy weak creatures, and quicken them who are as dead, that haply they may find Thee, and may be led unto the ocean of Thy guidance, and may remain steadfast in Thy Cause. ... We beg of Thee, O Providence, to show Thy way unto all men, and to guide them aright. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing.*[34]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Oil as a symbol of wisdom and faith

Jesus related a short story to assist His followers to recognize their Promised One. In that story, just as in Sura 24 The Light (its oil is illumined), there is a mention of illumination provided by oil. The story compares the actions of two groups of chaste, young women. The group that did not have "oil", are called the foolish, and the group with oil, the wise. Many mysteries and lessons are hidden in this beautiful story. For example, **only with the "oil of wisdom and faith" can we recognize the Messengers:**

> At that time, the kingdom of heaven* [on earth] will be like ten virgins (virtuous Christians) who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom (the promised Messiah). Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
>
> At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'
>
> Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'
>
> 'No,' they replied 'there may not be enough for both of us and you, instead go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'
>
> But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.
>
> Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir! They said, 'Open the door for us!'
>
> But he replied 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'
>
> Therefore keep watch (O My followers) because you don't know the day or the hour.† Matthew 25:10–13

The above story contains the most important principles regarding the relationship between God and His servants. For example, it teaches us that only with the light of reason and wisdom we can recognize God's Messengers. Reason and wisdom, the oil that is lit with the help of God, illuminates the straight path for us.

Bahá'u'lláh also uses allegorical language in His Writings. In the following utterance He asks us to illuminate our spirit, which is like a lamp, with the oil of

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* This alludes to the return of Christ: *This is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven".* Matt. 6:9–10
Muslims who abandon Islam for Christianity should be aware that Bahá'u'lláh is also the Promised One for Christians, and that His Revelation has fulfilled the Promise of the Return of Christ.
Say: O people! Verily, the Spirit hath come once again that He may complete for you that which He hath said before .... Know of a truth that the One Who ascended to the Heaven hath now come down, and through Him the sweet fragrances of bounty have passed upon the world; and thy Lord is a witness to My words.
Bahá'u'lláh, Iqtidárát, pp. 92–93.

† The symbols tree, niche, lamp and oil (fuel) are also found in the following verses:
All praise be to God Who hath, through the power of Truth, sent down this Book unto His servant, that it may serve as a shining light for all mankind .... The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 41.
I implore Thee, O Thou Who causest the dawn to appear, by Thy Lamp which Thou didst light with the fire of Thy love before all that are in heaven and on earth, and whose flame Thou feedest with the fuel of Thy wisdom in the kingdom of Thy creation .... Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 32–33 (no. XXVII)

wisdom, place it in the chamber of our heart, and strive to protect it with the glass of reason and understanding:

> *Kindle with the oil of wisdom the lamp of the spirit within the innermost chamber of thy heart, and guard it with the globe of understanding ....*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

According to the aforementioned parable of Jesus , the wise girls were not allowed to give any of their oil to the foolish girls. Everyone is responsible to obtain knowledge and wisdom for themselves, to be able to see with their own eyes and know through their own understanding, not through the eyes and understanding of others.

If wisdom—this bounty and gift of God—had a tongue what would it tell us?

> *The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

Without the "*Sun of Wisdom*" it is impossible to see and comprehend the mysteries of creation. Wisdom, this light of our path, this incomparable and matchless gift, is in God's hands, and it will be bestowed on those who desire it and strive, with heart and soul, to become worthy of it. Would it be fair for one to obtain this most valuable gift of God without effort?

> God will bestow wisdom on whom He will, and whosoever has obtained wisdom has acquired a great gift. Qur'án 2:269

This promise of God, i.e. "*And whoso makes efforts for us, in Our ways shall We assuredly guide him.*" (Qur'án 29:69), is truly a commitment of our creator to us; and in our journey towards God it must be our guide and encouragement, and the center and axis of our thoughts.

The history of the appearance of God's Messengers shows that "idle fancy and vain imaginings" are the most dangerous and most treacherous enemies of humanity. To submit our eternal destiny to these traitors is not a sign of knowledge and wisdom. The danger of these traitors is in the power and extent of their dominion; these rulers over the heart and soul, these friend-like pretenders, are so powerful that they continually prevent people from recognizing the Messengers of God, and are the cause of cruelty and injustice toward the Messengers and their followers.

One of the most common vain imaginings among the people is that their ancestors' beliefs is the only true religion.

> When they are told: 'Obey what God has revealed'; they say: 'No, we shall follow what our ancestors have given us'. What! Even if their forefathers were foolish and misguided? Qur'án 2:170, 5:104

After the passing of centuries, people's customs remain unchanged; the forces of imitation and imagination are still at war with the forces of liberty and knowledge; "vain imagination and supposition" are still ruling the thoughts,

beliefs and behavior of the great majority of the people of the world. A well-known American psychologist believes that the source of all the calamities in the world are "untested assumptions"; meaning that people assume something is correct or incorrect; then take action to prove their assumption and vain imagining.

Another assumption and vain imagining prevalent in the area of religion and belief is that the Messengers must appear in ways expected by the people. Have not people with such idle thoughts and assumptions studied the history of the appearance of the Messengers? Do they not know that such expectations have never been fulfilled?

> *Never hath God manifested Himself in ways that the people imagined, but hath revealed Himself in ways contrary to that which the people possess.*[37] Bahá'u'lláh

How numerous the Shí'ih believers who are still expecting their Qá'im to appear in the world out of the depths of a well, and to manifest great power with a sharp sword, suddenly freeing them from life's misfortunes. Addressing such believers, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *Say: O ye who languish in the wastes of waywardness! Which of these idle fancies regarded by you as undisputable can be declared true?*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Not a single word of that which hath been circulated among these people regarding that great Luminary, the Qá'im, is based on the truth.*[39] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Most people, believing the vain imaginings of former times, and the tales of old, have been deprived of recognizing the Desire of the world. Ye must detach yourselves from whatever is current amongst men, and from tales, words and allusions; then, with heart and soul sanctified, must ye turn your faces towards the abode of the Merciful. Should a man fix his gaze on the vain imaginings of former times, he shall never partake of the clear living waters proffered by the Peerless One.*[40] Bahá'u'lláh

Another form of vain imagining prevalent among the followers of all religions relates to the role of their clerics. Many of the faithful falsely imagine that these clerics are their best guides to lead them to the highest Paradise. They think that these leaders possess the map that will guide them to that vast and eternal abode. Why do these people fail to remember that leaders of religion have always been the instruments of denial and persecution of the Messengers of God? Have they not heard that in the early days of the appearance of God's Messengers, the only desire of these powerful leaders was to protect their rank and station? More than any other group, they were responsible for the persecution of the Messengers of God and of massacring their followers.

Many mysteries are hidden and manifest in the the parable that Jesus told about the young girls. For example, there is the following warning: those who fail to use wisdom and understanding as guides in their destiny will find the

doors of the Kingdom shut on their faces after leaving this earthly life.* When these believers plead for entrance into the eternal Heaven, they suddenly discover that they are "strangers" in that world:

> Verily, I say unto you, I know you not. Matt. 25:12

Why this response to these believers? Jesus likens Paradise to a wedding festival. Is it wise for the bride and groom to invite a stranger to their wedding celebration? The spiritually ignorant followers are void of understanding and wisdom, and their souls are deprived of the light of knowledge and insight; if they had truly recognized their Messenger they would have, with heart and soul, obeyed His commandments. However, they acted contrary to the good pleasure of God, and on His Return, instead of expressing love, faith and servitude in His Court, they considered Him a stranger, and did not welcome His arrival. The Promised One wanted to enter their hearts, but they did not open its door to Him. They did not admit Him into their hearts; perhaps they even accused Him of dishonesty and deceitfulness. Is this the way a friend treats a friend? In truth, they only believed in their Messenger in words, but did not know Him. How can a friend not recognize a friend? Belief is not based on words alone. Among the believers in every religion, there is a group of people who testify to the truth of their Messenger, but they do not know Him.

> *Some have recognized Him and testified to the Truth; others bear witness, but know Him not.*[41] Bahá'u'lláh

Now, those followers who ignored their Promised One, and treated Him as a stranger, are facing the consequences of their behavior. They shall be treated as they treated their Promised One; just as they closed the door of their hearts to His face, He shuts the door of Heaven to their faces. Is this not justice?

The Báb, Who fulfills the promise of the "Return" of Christ, warns all believers, especially Muslims who deny Him, with the following words:

> *On that Day thou wouldst regard thyself as the inmate of Paradise and as a true believer in Him, whereas in reality thou wouldst suffer thyself to be wrapt in veils and thy habitation would be the nethermost fire, though thou thyself wouldst not be cognizant thereof.*[42] The Báb

There are numerous beliefs and points of view in the world. Christianity, for example, is now divided into thousands of sects. How is it that people with contradictory and diverse beliefs, from whatever sect or denomination, religious or irreligious, love their own beliefs and consider them superior to all other beliefs?

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* The expressions **"Gate of Heaven"** or **"Gate of Hell"** have been used in many heavenly Books, and have symbolic meanings; they should not be taken literally. These expressions have also been used to refer to the stations or ranks of heaven and hell; In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Gate of Heaven:
Announce unto the people the glad-tidings of the Presence of God in the most glorious Heaven. Verily, its Gate hath been opened, by the grace of God, before the faces of those who have turned thereunto. Bahá'u'lláh (Iqtidárát, pp. 94-95 (prov. tr.))

Each group delights in its own beliefs. Qur'án 23:53

The Báb confirms this truth in another way:

In every nation, thou wilt witness the people claiming: "We do this for the sake of God"; whereas in reality they act entirely against God.[43] The Báb

Assumption, imagination, suspicion, supposition and idle fancy—these propensities are possessors of power; these friendly-looking enemies, which have found safe and secure homes in the hearts of many people, have been repeatedly condemned in the divine Court. Nevertheless, most believers, whether Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian or Muslim consider them to be true friends, abide by their judgement, and place their eternal fate in the hands of these enemies. People may live a hundred years without wondering: "Why do people holding contradictory beliefs persist and are so certain of the truth of their own beliefs and thoughts?"

People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto names they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

When the morn of the Day of God dawned, and the horizons were illumined with the light of the Sun of Reality, all were found shut out as by dark veils from the Dawning-Place of the Light ... Each and every one, holding fast unto a Book, deprived themselves of the Revealer of that Book.[45] Bahá'u'lláh

Say, O people! This is the Day wherein ye must rend asunder every veil, and obliterate every trace of vain imaginings.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

Another principle taught by Jesus in the above short and beautiful story is:

The foolish ones said to the wise: "Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out." "No", they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you".

Why could the wise girls not give a share of their oil to the foolish ones? Knowledge and wisdom are not merchandise that can be given. Only with search and striving can they be acquired. The first step toward earning them is obtaining spiritual freedom, seeing with one's own eyes and discovering with one's own determination and reflection:

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; .... By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge ....[47] Bahá'u'lláh

Addressing a person who had relied on idle fancy rather than the balance of understanding and justice, Bahá'u'lláh states:

Speak not of that which thou hast not witnessed, and write not of that which thou hast not understood. Erelong shalt thou return to dust, as shall we all.[48] Bahá'u'lláh

How regrettable the fate of those who, all their life, pursue this idle fancy: **Happiness and eternal glory lies in the accumulation of wealth.** These wanderers, who are chasing the wind, are deprived of the beauties and wonders of God, in both worlds:

> Whosoever is (spiritually) blind in this world, will also be blind in the next world.
> Qur'án 17:72

Light of wisdom and faith

In Sura 57 al-Ḥadíd ("the Iron"), there are verses similar to the "story of the wise and foolish girls". It would be instructive to examine and compare such allegorical verses of the two holy Books:

A light that shines in the face of the believers in the new Faith

> He Who reveals clear verses to His servant that He may free you from darkness and lead you to light; truly God, your Lord, is kind and compassionate.
> Qur'án 57:9

> A day will come when you shall see the believers with their light shining in front of them, and on their right side is this glad-tidings: Your place this day is in gardens under which rivers flow; this is a great salvation. Qur'án 57:12

> A day when the hypocrites will say to the believers: "Wait for us, let us share in your light". The believers will say: "Turn back and obtain your own light (with your own efforts)". Qur'án 57:13

Similarity between the Bible and the Qur'án

The similarities between the verses of the Qur'án and the story of the "wise and foolish girls" demonstrate that the Qur'án and the Bible are from the same Source. Both Books teach us that:

- To enter the eternal Paradise **the oil of wisdom and the light of understanding** must guide us. We cannot find the right path in the darkness of imitation and the ignorance of prejudice.
- Each person is responsible for gaining the gifts of wisdom and understanding on her/his own; these gifts cannot be borrowed from others.
- The door of the Kingdom and divine mercy is always closed on the face of those who lack the **"oil of wisdom"** and the **"light of knowledge and understanding".** When the foolish girls knocked on the door to enter the divine celebration, they heard their promised Messiah say: "Truly, I do not know you!" In what tradition or for what reason would it be reasonable for strangers to take part in someone's festivities? To be left outside the "door" is to be eternally deprived from Paradise; and to enter through the "door" into the divine festivities means that one gains eternal salvation, grace and mercy of God.
- The **"oil of wisdom"** and the **"light of understanding"** must be attained in this world; after the journey through this earthly life, it would be impossible to return and try to make amends for the past.

> *Whatever is forfeited, ye cannot and never shall be able to acquire hereafter.*[49]
> Bahá'u'lláh

A conversation between deniers and believers in the eternal world

Let us continue to examine the verses of Sura 57 al-Ḥadíd ("the Iron"):

> The deniers call out to the believers and say: 'Were we not with you?' The believers reply: 'Yes, but you deceived yourselves, waited too long, had doubts and relied on false hopes, until the Cause of God was manifested and the deceiver deceived you concerning [the Manifestation of] God.' Qur'án 57:14

Explanation: After passing through this earthly life into the eternal life, the deniers of the Bahá'í Faith will discover their sad fate and will be greatly surprised; inasmuch as all their life they considered themselves to be believers and expected to enter into the eternal Paradise. They are now greatly surprised and they ask the believers: "Where we not with you?" The believers and the deniers may have lived in the same city, the same location, and perhaps even the same home. What had happened? Why are they separated from each other, some in Hell, and others in Heaven?

Jesus also gave a similar warning to His followers:

> Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.'
>
> But he will answer, "I don't know you or where you come from."
>
> Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets'
>
> But he will reply, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!"
>
> There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Luke 13:25–29

Qur'án 57:14 also mentions the reasons why people turn away from the call of their Promised One. For example, it reminds them of the following five reasons:

- **"You deceived yourselves"**. This is perhaps the most common reason to deny the Messenger in all ages. How does one deceive oneself? By lying to oneself; lying is the source of many misfortunes and adversities. A well-known proverb states: "no one can deceive us better than ourselves".

> *Deceive not your own selves that you are being virtuous for the sake of God when you are not.*[50] The Báb

Millions of Iranian Muslims have heard their religious leaders state the Bahá'ís are "a misled and misleading sect". Without the least search or study, these people have accepted this lie, and have deceived themselves.

- **"You waited too long"**. Patience is a praiseworthy human attribute. Is waiting or hesitation in doing good work also praiseworthy? We should know that our time in this world is short, and life passes by too fast; we would be wise to choose our eternal destiny as soon as possible; because it is fruitless to regret our hesitation after the completion of our journey through this life.
- **"You doubted"**. Doubt and hesitation snatch the gifts of freedom and choice out of our hands, and prevent us from recognizing the Messengers of God. According to God's Plan, we must choose our eternal future in this world. If we hesitate in accepting the Call of God, then we have wasted the greatest gifts of God—freedom and choice.
- **"You deceived yourselves with false hopes"**. There are many ways to deceive ourselves. According to Qur'án 57:14, people, to whatever group they belong, are satisfied and happy with what they have. Those who have lived in darkness are accustomed to darkness where the rays of the light of knowledge and understanding do not disturb their peace. Many are satisfied accumulating wealth, or acquiring power and fame, in the hope of eternal happiness **in this world**, neglectful that their stay in this world is as a second when compared to eternity.
- **"The deceiver has deceived you about [the Manifestation of] God"**. In whom do people place their trust for information regarding religion, but who often deceive them? In all ages this group has and continues to be the leaders of religion. If Jews or Christians asked their religious leaders about the truth of Islám, what would they hear? Would they be encouraged to investigate? Are Muslim clerics any different?
- **"Until the Cause of God was manifested"**. These words clearly refer to the two Promised Ones of our era, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. As we have repeatedly explained, the word Amr ("Cause") is one of the most important signs of the great puzzle of the Qur'án, and clearly refers to the Bahá'í Cause. The word has repeatedly been used by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh to describe the two religions of our time:

> Blessed is he that followeth the Command of God.[51] — Bahá'u'lláh
>
> So great is the glory of the Cause of God ....[52] — Bahá'u'lláh
>
> If ye follow the Cause of God, We will forgive you your sins,[53] — The Báb
>
> It behooveth you to proclaim the Cause of God unto all created things as a token of grace from His presence;[54] — The Báb
>
> We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth. Fear ye God and entertain no doubts regarding His Cause,[55] — The Báb

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh likens the Messengers to "the Temples of the Cause of God":

> ... all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire.[56] Bahá'u'lláh

Conversation in the eternal world ends with a warning from God

> Then on this Day, no ransom shall be accepted from you or the other deniers; your dwelling and your master is the Fire*—What a gloomy fate! Qur'án 57:15

After the above warning to the deniers of the Religion of God who have gone to the eternal world, God asks Muslims living in this world:

> Is it not time for the believers to humble their hearts before the **Remembrance of God** and whatever He hath revealed of the Truth? And they should not be like those people to whom the [heavenly] Book was revealed before, and the term was prolonged for them so their hearts hardened? Most of them [the hard-hearted] are of the rebellious. Qur'án 57:16

Explanation: It is necessary for us to determine whether the previous verse is addressed to the Muslims or deniers. The beginning of the verse shows that it is addressed to Muslims, not the deniers:

> Is it not time for the believers ...?

What kind of Muslims does this verse address? Muslims who:

- Are not humble before the "Remembrance of God".
- Are not humble before what has been revealed—the verses of God.
- Are hard-hearted, like those who previously denied their Promised One.
- Are corrupt and rebellious.

These signs apply only to those Muslims who deny their Promised One, are haughty and belittle the Promised One. In addition, the above verse uses the title of the promised Qá'im, the Báb. As we discussed before, Dhikr and Dhikru'lláh ("Remembrance" and "Remembrance of God") are some of the signs of the puzzle of the Qur'án. These two titles for the promised Qá'im have been used in many verses of the Qur'án. The Báb has been repeatedly addressed by God with these titles. In the above verse, like many other verses, God asks Muslims not to deny their Promised One as did former ummahs, i.e. not to have impenetrable hearts.

> *All, by reason of the veils of self and desire, have remained hindered from recognizing the Sun of Bahá'.*[57] Bahá'u'lláh

At the end of Sura 57 al-Ḥadíd, God provides another sign for Muslims in order that no one has any doubts or misgivings:

> O believers! Fear God and believe in His Messenger that He may give you a double portion of His mercy; and bestow a light that you will walk [the right way]; and forgive you [your sins]. God is the Forgiving, the Compassionate. Qur'án 57:28

It is clear that the above verse is addressed to the believers, saying: "O believers! Fear God and believe in the Messenger". Is it rational to ask the

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* Burning in the fire of separation from the Source of all happiness

believers in Islám to fear God and become Muslims? Suppose you were holding a wedding festival, and told the attendees: "O friends! Accept my invitation to the wedding!" What would those present think? They would be confident that another wedding festival is to occur. This verse also, with perfect elegance, explains to the believers that another Revelation is coming, they must be watchful and not deny the next Promised One; the verse states that if you believe in Him you will twice receive grace and mercy:

- In this world, the Light of God—Bahá'u'lláh—is your guide.
- In the afterlife, you will receive God's gifts and bounties, because of your belief in this great Messenger. According to Bahá'u'lláh, people who free themselves from the fetters of imitation, and accept the new Faith of God will be cleansed from past sins by the divine Source of grace and bounty.

We shall know God through His Words

This is the Day in which the Beauty of God is unveiled and His Light manifested.[58]
Bahá'u'lláh

The promise hath been fulfilled and the Promised One hath appeared. Blessed is he who hath hearkened unto His voice and answered the Call of his Lord, and woe betide him who hath erred and doubted.[59] Bahá'u'lláh

The River of life hath, in this Day, been made manifest and the true Spirit hath appeared. Strive that you may receive a portion of this boundless grace .... This blessed Day hath never had, nor will it ever have, any peer or likeness. Whatever is forfeited is impossible to acquire thereafter. This lowly servant, by day and night, entreateth the One True God, exalted be His glory, to aid and assist all. He is, in truth, the Giver, the Generous.[60] Bahá'u'lláh

How long will ye follow your corrupt desires? The Sun of guidance hath dawned; turn ye unto it, sanctified from the sayings of the past uttered by your divines. By God! This is naught but the appearance of God.[61] Bahá'u'lláh

O peoples of the earth! Bear ye allegiance unto this resplendent light wherewith God hath graciously invested Me through the power of infallible Truth, ...[62]
The Báb

O people! Entertain no doubts regarding the Light of God ....[63] The Báb

1 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 244.
2 Tafsír-us-Ṣáfí, vol. 4, p. 331.
3 A'lámu'l-vará, 'Allámu'l-Hudá, p. 464.
4 The Tabernacle of Unity, p. 61, (gr. 3.10)
5 The Kitáb-i-Bayán, p. 2. (prov. tr.)
6 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 242.
7 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 61.
8 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167 (no. 85)
9 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
10 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 17.
11 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, volume 7, p. 233. (prov. tr.)
12 *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, p. 53.
13 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 114.
14 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 74.

15 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 99. (prov. tr.)
16 *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 104.
17 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 325 (no. CLIII)
18 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 266. (prov. tr.)
19 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 42. (prov. tr.)
20 Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
21 Tafsíru's-Ṣáfí, vol. 4, p. 331.
22 Al-Irshád fí Ma'rífat-i-Ḥujuju'llah 'Al'al'ibád, vol. 2, p. 382.
23 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 244.
24 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 90.
25 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, pp. 252–253. (prov. tr.)
26 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 72 (gr. 5.2)
27 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 19 (gr. 1)
28 Khádim, Jávídukht. Dhikru'lláh Khádim, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990, p. 323.
29 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 114.
30 The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Arabic No. 11.
31 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 15.
32 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 3, pp. 76–77. (prov. tr.)
33 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 80.
34 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 10.
35 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 61.
36 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 169.
37 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 109. (prov. tr.)
38 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 171. (prov. tr.)
39 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 172. (prov. tr.)
40 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 148. (prov. tr.)
41 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 155. (prov. tr.)
42 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 83.
43 The Kitáb-i-Bayan, p. 111. (prov. tr.)
44 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58.
45 Quoted in Payám-i-Bahá'í, Sept. 2011, p. 4. (prov. tr.)
46 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 170–171. (prov. tr.)
47 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 3 (Arabic no. 2)
48 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 172. (prov. tr.)
49 Áyát-i-Iláhí,, vol. 1, p. 267. (prov. tr.)
50 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.
51 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 136. (prov. tr.)
52 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 106 (no. LII)
53 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 61.
54 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 10.
55 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 57.
56 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 153.
57 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 32. (prov. tr.)
58 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 298. (prov. tr.)
59 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 236. (prov. tr.)
60 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 234. (prov. tr.)
61 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 255. (prov. tr.)
62 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 48.
63 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 114. (prov. tr.)

Part 7
Other signs and proofs

This part contains two chapters:

16. Names and titles of the two Promised Ones
17. What do the Traditions say?

Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book (Qur'án) in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever hath been prophesied in the past, hath in this Day been made manifest.[2] Bahá'u'lláh

For whatsoever hath come to pass, hath been prophesied ....[3] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever hath come to pass in this Day hath been foretold in the Scriptures of old.[4] Bahá'u'lláh

We have explained all things in detail. Qur'án 17:12

1 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 174 (paragraph 187)
2 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 206.
3 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 237(paragraph 267)
4 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 344 (no. CLXIV)

16
Names and titles of the two Promised Ones

The first few verses of Sura 43 az-Zukhruf provide a number of signs and prophecies concerning the appearance of the Báb. Let us examine some of these signs and see if they conform to the manifestation of that Promised One.

Ḥá Mím — Qur'án 43:1

Explanation: This verse consists of only two letters, Ḥá and Mím; it provides us with a sign of the first name of the Báb (i.e. Muḥammad). The fourth verse refers to his second name ('Alí).

The Báb: 'Alí Muḥammad—Muḥammad consists of Mím, Ḥá & Dál

I swear by the clear Book (Qur'án) — Qur'án 43:2

Explanation: This verse informs us of the high station of the Qur'án, and encourages us to strive to discover the mysteries enshrined in it. Why is the Qur'án referred to as "the clear Book", whereas we know that it is the source of allusions and mysteries? According to God's decree and His wisdom, whatever must be disclosed, from this source of mysteries, will be made clear and manifest in due time. Our spiritual sustenance will be provided by God, whenever we are in need of that sustenance, in a fixed and predestined measure—no more and no less—bestowed from the heaven of God's bounty and mercy.

Before the appearance of the Báb, many of the glad-tidings of the Qur'án were hidden in the form of "allegorical language", and were made manifest by the Báb. Consider the following example: the Qur'án repeatedly refers to the Báb with the word *Dhikr* ("Remembrance"). No one was aware of this mystery for 13 centuries. Forty years ago, this author carefully studied the Qur'án from beginning to end, but did not notice the allegorical meaning of *Dhikr* until I saw that title in the Writings of the Báb. The next time I read the Qur'án, I understood, for the first time, the mystery of the word *Dhikr* and its connection to the Promised One of this era. Sometimes the recognition of one mystery and the solving of one puzzle, by itself, paves the way to the discovery of truth—in this case, finding the meaning of many other mysteries in the Qur'án. This is also true in the world of science; for example, the discovery of atoms or the existence of gravitational forces, uncovered many of the laws of nature.

The meaning of "allegorical verses" are hidden in a treasury. The Promised One of the age provides us with the key to this treasury. Using this key, a new world suddenly becomes visible, a world that has been before our eyes, though we never saw it.

We revealed the Qur'án in Arabic, perchance you may comprehend. — Qur'án 43:3

Explanation: What is the connection between the Qur'án being in Arabic and people being able to reason and understand? This verse proves that, in the first place, the point or mystery hidden in these verses is related to the Arabic language; secondly, to discover that mystery we must reason and understand.

Since the name and titles of the Promised One are in Arabic, it is much easier to introduce and recognize Him in that language. Many Muslim scholars believe the name of the Apostle of God, Aḥmad, has been given in the Bible in Greek as "Paraclete".* Their argument is based only on the similar meaning of the two words, not their appearance; but Christians do not accept this argument.

> And surely, He is [mentioned] in the Mother Book [Qur'án]; in Our [God's] sight He is verily Alí [and] Ḥakím [Exalted, Wise]. Qur'án 43:4

Explanation: This verse clearly gives us the other part of the name of the Báb ('Alí). Ḥakím ("Wise") is used in this verse to qualify the name 'Alí. We can conclude from these signs that the name of the Promised One is a combination of the names 'Alí and Muḥammad. Who else but the Promised One is worthy of being called 'Alí—one of the names of God in the Mother Book (the Qur'án)?† Who else but the Promised One is worthy to be described in that Book by the attribute Ḥakím ("the Wise One"), which is an attribute of God?

Ḥ	K	Í	M	'Alí Ḥakím
M	Ḥ	M	D	'Alí Muḥammad

In the following verses, the Báb refers to both 'Alí Ḥakím and Dhikr:

> *In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praised be the One Who hath revealed this Book wherein is enshrined the law of all things as a guidance from God unto those who hear. This is indeed a Revelation from Him Who is the Incomparable. The Exalted, the Wise. Say: This is the Book about which there can be no doubt; its verses have been clearly set forth by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. Say: I, verily, am* the Remembrance *from your Merciful Lord, besides Whom there is no other God. He, verily, summoneth you to worship none other besides Him. This is the One true Faith of God, as mentioned in the Preserved Book* [Qur'án].[1] The Báb

> *Is it so astonishing to you that the Spirit would reveal Itself to a soul like unto yourselves, Who would recite Our verses to you, that He may purify you and teach you the Book and Its wisdom? He hath been designated, in Our sight, as the* Exalted, the Wise *in the Mother Book?*[2] The Báb

> *This is the true Faith, if ye be of the truthful in the Religion of God. Say: This is My Path, calling you unto the One True God. Whoever desireth, let him believe, and whoever desireth, let him turn away. Verily, this is the conclusive Proof of God, set forth by Him Who is the Exalted, the Wise.*[3] The Báb

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* Paraklete, Paraclete or Paracletos, means "the Interceder", "the One Who intercedes"; Aḥmad means "more praiseworthy". Christians say Paraclete is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

† According to the Sukhan dictionary, 'Alí is one of the names of God. A title of the Báb is Rabb-i-A'lá. A'lá ("the Most Exalted") and 'Alí ("the High") are from the same root.

This, verily, is an Epistle from the Exalted, the Wise , and revealed by the decree of thy Lord.[4] The Báb

Indeed, We have appointed Thee .... before God as the Exalted, the Wise.[5] The Báb

This is a Book inscribed by the hand of Him Who is the Remembrance, the Exalted, The Wise.[6] The Báb

Addressing the Shariff of Mecca:

Verily this Epistle is revealed, at the biddin of thy Lord, by the Exalted, the Wise .... Follow thou that which is disclosed unto thee in the Book of thy Lord.[7] The Báb

In the following utterance, the Báb testifies through the tongue of God that His name has been recorded in the Qur'án:

Say: My name is 'Alí Muḥammad; indeed, it hath been recorded in the Book of God [the Qur'án].[8] The Báb

There are also mysteries hidden in the disconnected letters at the beginning of Sura 42 ash-Shúrá "the Consultation":

"Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín Qáf". Thus does God reveal unto you and unto those who came before you. God is the Almighty, the All-Wise. Qur'án 42:1–3

What mystery is hidden in the disconnected letters Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín and Qáf? According to a ḥadíth:

These are letters from the Most Great Name of God, which had been separated. The Messenger and the Imám will connect them together.[9]

The above ḥadíth teaches us two points:

- "Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín Qáf" is related to one of the Names of God. The title of the Báb is "the Most Exalted Lord" (Rabb al-A'lá). The name of this Promised One is hidden in those letters.
- The name of the Promised One is a combination of the name of the "Messenger" and the name of the "Imám"; 'Alí Muḥammad fulfills this prophecy.

Ṣadru's-Ṣudúr, a great Muslim scholar who became a Bahá'í, relates the disconnected letters Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín and Qáf to the name of the Promised One of our age ('Alí Muḥammad), the date of His appearance (AH 1260) and His station (Qá'im) in the following way:

Ḥá' Mím = Muḥammad	'Ayn = 'Alí
Sín = Sittín ("60")	Qáf = Qá'im

Is it possible for the letter Sín to also refer to Siyyid or Sá'at ("Hour")? If we arrange the letters "Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín Qáf" in reverse order, the identity of the Báb is revealed:

Qáf	Sín	'Ayn	Mím Ḥá'
Qá'im	Siyyid	'Alí	Muḥammad

Many Traditions about the Qá'im have been related that conform to the prophecies of the Qur'án. For example, Muḥammad states:

> His name is 'Alí and I am under that name.[10]
>
> The Qá'im, His name is before my name.[11]

According to another ḥadíth in *Biḥár al-Anwár*:

> He possesses two names; one is the "successor" ('Alí), and the other Muḥammad. He will appear in the Last Days.[12]

The combination of the words 'Alí and Muḥammad was perhaps because, as well as being a Messenger, the Báb represented the expected return by the Shí'ih Muslims of the 12th Imám.

The name selected for Him by His parents happens to indicate both stations. The following question may cross our mind: Why was Muḥammad not placed first in this combination? We may know that the combination "Muḥammad 'Alí" is very common; as a sign of respect for the Prophet, the believers place His name first. However, the combination "'Alí Muḥammad" is rare. This rare combination distinguishes the Promised One from others.

What mystery is hidden in Qur'án 15:87?

> Indeed We (God) have given you seven twice, accompanied by the great Qur'án.

What is the meaning of "seven twice"? Some of the interpreters of the Qur'án say the number seven is a reference to Sura 1 al-Fátiḥa ("the Opening"), which has seven verses. This interpretation is not reasonable for the following two reasons:

1. The sura has seven not 14 verses
2. The sura is part of the Qur'án, not an addition to it

In answer to a believer who asked about the meaning of this verse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that "seven twice" is a reference to the names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh,[13] because each of the names of the two Promised Ones has seven letters:

The Báb	'Alí Muḥammad	Alif	Lám	Yá'	Mím	Ḥá'	Mím	Dál
Bahá'u'lláh	Ḥusayn 'Alí	Ḥá'	Sín	Yá'	Nún	Alif	Lám	Yá'

Sometimes, in reference to the seven letters in His name, the Báb used the following expression:

> The Essence of "the seven letters", the Gate of God.[14]

In addition, the disconnected letters combination Ḥá' Mím has been repeated seven times in the Qur'án.*

Sura 15 al-Ḥijr concludes with the following verse:

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* According to Yúsuf-'Alí: The combination of abbreviated letters that run in a series of consecutive suras is noticeable. For example, Há' Mím occurs in suras 40 to 46.

Worship your Lord until you attain certitude. Qur'án 15:99

The worship of God and praying at His Court is the vehicle of the recognition of the Promised One, and a path for reaching the stage of certitude.

Say: Cast away your vain imaginings. By God! The Day-Star of certitude hath shone forth.[15] Bahá'u'lláh

The Remnant of God

A number of Muslim scholars, among them Dr. Fraydún Ṣaḥḥáfí, have discovered that the title Baqíyyatu'lláh ("the Remnant of God") in the following verse is a reference to the Lord of the Age (the Qá'im):

If you are [true] believers the Remnant of God is good for you; but I am not your guardian.* Qur'án 11:86

The Remnant of God, the Lord of the Age.[16] The Báb

From the meaning of "**the Remnant of God**", we can conclude that, in the first place, the phrase refers to the Messengers of God, since each One is the Mouthpiece of God, His Representative, Sign and Remembrance. We can consider any One of Them as "the Remnant of God", as the Spirit of each is a Ray of the Spirit of God. From the grandeur of His inaccessible Realm of Glory, God—the Sun of Truth—sheds His Light upon all His creation; but it is only through His Messengers that God's Light is perfectly reflected. Thus, we can refer to this Light—perfectly reflected by His Messenger—as a "Remnant" or "Sign" of the Sun of Reality. Otherwise, what would be the meaning of "**the Remnant of God**"? Is God divisible so as to have a "remnant"?

In addition, the verse informs us that true faith is the prerequisite for recognizing and benefiting from "**the Remnant of God**". Only true believers realize that "**the Remnant of God**" is the Source of every good for humanity.

The last clause of verse 11:86 (*I am not* your guardian)—is also understandable. Inasmuch as the Qur'án has referred to the role of the Apostle of God, it teaches us that His only responsibility is to inform us. The Messengers do not have the responsibility to guard and protect us. The limit of their responsibility is to provide us with the signs and proofs of recognizing the Promised One. "**The Remnant of God**" is such a sign. We are called upon to keep an open and critical mind in order to recognize and accept these signs.

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* In many instances, the true meaning of some words can be discovered only by searching and investigating the whole of the Qur'án. For example, before the news of the appearance of "the Remnant of God", God refers to those who use "short weights". Sura 83 al-Muṭaffifín ("those who use short weights") relates to the appearance of the Promised One of our age; the contents of the sura clearly demonstrate that the true purpose of discussing "using short weights" is the observance of justice at the time of the appearance of the Promised One, that is:
The day when the people will stand before the Lord of the worlds. (Qur'án 83:6)

As we saw before, the same terminology has been used, in reference to this Faith, in another verse. Compare these verses:

> But Thy people [Muslims] denied Him; [even though] He is the True One. **Say: I am not responsible for you.** Qur'án 6:66

> If you are true believers "**the Remnant of God**" is a source of good for you; but **I am not your guardian.** Qur'án 11:86

Similar verses have been revealed about the Apostle of God:

> If God desired, they would not become unbelievers. You have not been appointed as their guardian, and you are not responsible for them. Qur'án 6:107

> I am not your guardian. Qur'án 6:104

> Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed God; but if anyone turns away, We have not sent you to watch over them (as their keeper). Qur'án 4:80

The title Baqíyyatu'lláh ("**the Remnant of God**"), especially in reference to the two Promised Onesof our age, is quite consistent with other prophecies, as they both have appeared with the "name of God". In the following utterance, the Spirit of God speaks through the Messenger, the Báb:

> *I am the Countenance of God Whose splendour can never be obscured, the Light of God Whose radiance can never fade.*[17] The Báb

In the Bahá'í sacred Writings the title "the Remnant of God" has been repeatedly used to refer to both Promised Ones of our age. The Báb states:

> [This Book] *in truth hath been revealed by the Remnant of God, Him Who is the true Leadeer, the Ancient of Days.*[18] The Báb

> *Those who believe in the Remembrance , the Remnant of God Who is the proof from your Lord, are the true worshippers of God.*[19] The Báb

> *These verses are a proof from the Remnant of God.*[20] The Báb

> *Say: I have no station except what the Spirit hath decreed, instilled in My heart by the Remnant of God.*[21] The Báb

> *Know thou verily, that the Remnant of God is the Testimony of thy Lord. He knoweth all that is in the heavens and on earth; and by the leave of thy Lord, He is, verily, powerful to do as He pleaseth.*[22] The Báb

> *Observe justly the commandments of the Remnant of God, in justice. For, Verily, in this Day, there is no refuge for anyone except belief in the verses of God, and prostrationf before Him.*[23] The Báb

In the following verse the Báb uses the title **"the Remnant of God"** to refer to the next Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh:

> *O THOU Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.*[24] The Báb

In the following verses the titles **"the Remnant of God"** and **"'Alí Ḥakím"** (the Exalted, the Wise) have both been used:

Say: O people! Hearken ye unto the commandments of the Remnant of God, as decreed by His Servant, the Exalted, the Wise.[25] The Báb

These are they who know not the commandments of the Remnant of God, as decreed by His Servant the Exalted, the Wise.[26] The Báb

The Báb only gradually proclaimed the station of the Qá'im:

The Most Exalted One ... consented to identify Himself as the Gate, but the people did not accept it. He proclaims, "I am the Remnant of God"; the people rejected that too.[27] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To appease the people, the Báb initially called Himself "the Gate of the Remnant of God" and "the servant of the Remnant of God":

I am but the Servant of the Remnant of God Who is summoning you unto the true Faith of God.[28] The Báb

Since the Báb referred to Bahá'u'lláh also as **"the Remnant of God"**, we could say that by using the word "Servant" He meant to express servitude to Bahá'u'lláh.

In Dalá'il-i-Sab'ih ("The Seven Proofs") the Báb states that in the beginning, the Manifestation of God revealed Himself as **the Gate of the promised Qá'im,** so that the people **would not be agitated by a new Book and a new Cause.**[29].

According to Muḥammad-'Alí Zunúzí:*

In the beginning, He [the Promised One] called Himself "the Gate" and "the servant of the Remnant of God" ... In truth, He is the Gate to and the Servant of Him Whom God will make manifest .... Later on, He referred to Himself as "the Remembrance of God" ... and the station of "the Gate" became associated with "the First to believe in Him", meaning Mullá Ḥusayn Bushrú'í. After a time, He proclaimed Himself the Qá'im.[30]

Verily, I am the Qá'im Whose appearance ye have been promised.[31] The Báb

The following titles of the two Promised Ones of our age are very similar:

The Qá'im hath appeared and announced unto the people the glad-tiding of the coming of the Qayyúm [He Who is the Self-Subsisting].[32] Bahá'u'lláh

Qá'im means the One Who rises; **Qayyúm** is the One Who is Self-Subsisting.

Rabb al-A'lá ("the Lord, the Most High")

One of the titles of the Báb is Rabb al-A'lá ("the Lord, the Most High"):

This is that which hath been revealed by .... The Lord, the Most High.[33] The Báb

Iranian Bahá'ís most frequently use the titles **Ḥaḍrat-i-A'lá ("His Holiness, the Most High")** or **Ḥaḍrat-i-Rabb-i-A'lá ("His Holiness, the Lord, the Most High")** for the Báb. Sura 87 **al-A'lá** contains 19 verses, and the phrase **"the name of the Lord, the Most High"** has been used twice:

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* Muḥammad-'Alí Zunúzí (surnamed Anís) was martyred with the Báb.

> [1] Praise the Name of Thy Lord, the Most High .... [14] Whoever remembers, with pure heart, [15] the Name of his Lord and praises Him will have salvation. Qur'án 87:1, 14, 15

The above verses refers twice to **"the Name of the Lord"** and not **"the Lord Himself"**. As mentioned before, due to the greatness of this Day, God bestows His Name "the Lord" (Rabb) upon the two Promised Ones of our age. The Bible also bears witness to this truth:

> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Psalm 118:26

> For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Matthew 23:39

> Blessed is the Name of your Lord, the Lord of glory and honor. Qur'án 55:78

> *Peruse thou the Epistle of the Remembrance, which is the Name of thy Lord,, as bidden by Him Who is the true, the perspicuous Leader.*[34] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh has used the same combination of words to refer to Himself:

> *Thou didst recognize the Ancient Beauty* when thou didst appear before His Throne, and the effulgent light of the Remembrance, which is the name of thy Lord, shed its radiance upon thy face.*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá also used the title "the Lord, the Most High" in reference to the Báb:

> *The Most Exalted Lord, the Most High ...*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Even as thou dost witness how all of them have busied themselves with the vanities of the world, and have strayed far from Him Who is the Lord, the Most High.*[37] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Báb, the Lord, the most exalted ... hath specifically revealed an Epistle unto the divines of every city ...*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Hearken unto the voice of the Lord, the Most High ....*[39] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Exalted One ... passed every day and night in the most afflictive tribulations in the path of God .... In the end, He made His breast the target of a thousand darts ....*[40] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

According to the utterances of the Báb, God has established a covenant with all creation regarding the Remembrance, the name of the Lord:

> *In truth, We have established a covenant with every created thing regarding the Remembrance, the Name of thy Lord.*[41] The Báb

Sura 87 *al-A'lá* ("the Most High") twice reminds and warns the believers:

> Remind then, if the warning is beneficial; but (only) the God-fearing are warned. Qur'án 87:9–10

The above verses state that the believers have an important responsibility and that they need to be reminded of it. However, some of them ignore the

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* The Ancient Beauty is one of the titles of Bahá'u'lláh.

warnings. Is it possible to imagine any greater responsibility than the recognition of the Promised One?

Some Muslim translators, for example Dr Muḥammad Muḥsin Khán and Dr Muḥammad Taqí'ud-dín al-Hiláli, have translated the above two verses in the following way:

> Therefore remind (men) in case the reminder profits (them). The reminder will be received by him who fears (Alláh). *The Noble Qur'án*, p. 718.

The above translation demonstrates that both verses of Sura 87 *al-A'lá* have referred to the other title of the Báb, *Dhikr*.

The following verse also uses the name "Lord" (*Rabb*):

> If some people are arrogant, those who are near to Thy Lord will praise Him. Qur'án 41:38

Who are those who are near to the Lord? Those believers who are in His presence and honor Him.

Warnings and reminders regarding the recognition of "the Remembrance" can also be seen in many other suras of the Qur'án, for example in Sura 74 al-Muddaththir:

> No, this is only a reminder; then whoever desires let him accept His Remembrance; but none will be warned except whom God desires. Qur'án 74:54–56

Whenever the Qur'án speaks of "the Hand of God", "the Face of God", or "Light of God", the intent is God's power, God's Beauty, and God's Light reflected in the Spirit of His Messengers; in particular, in the case of the two Promised Ones of our era who have been revealed by the title of "Lord" (*Rabb*). In those cases, those Manifestations of God—those pure and illumined Mirrors—have become non-existent in themselves and find their being in God.

> One who does not wish any reward except to behold the Face of his Lord, the Most High; soon surely will he be gladdened.* Qur'án 92:19–21

> This verse can be interpreted as: Believers who perform good deeds, only in the hope of beholding the Face of God, the Most High, attain salvation.

> All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord [revealed in His Messengers]. Qur'án 28:88

> *All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.*[42] Bahá'u'lláh

> *I am the Countenance of God Whose splendour can never be obscured, the Light of God Whose radiance can never fade.*[43] The Báb

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* Many translators, who are not aware of the mysteries of the Qur'án, try to assign their own interpretation to this verse. Instead of "the Face" of God, they write "the good pleasure" of God.

... a Day which hath been made bright by the radiant light of the countenance of its Lord, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the Unconstrained.[44] Bahá'u'lláh

Will ye knowingly deny the Face of God?[45] Bahá'u'lláh

Let nothing grieve thee. Thy Lord, verily, is with those who have turned unto His Countenance; erelong will they find themselves in the most sublime station; it is indeed a glorious station.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verse of the Qur'án speaks of "**the Face of God**" and "**the Remembrance of God**":

Be of those who call on their Lord at the dawn time and the night season, and seek His Face .... And do not follow him whom We made negligent of Our Remembrance, one who has followed the promptings of his corrupt inclinations, and overstepped his bounds. Qur'án 18:28

They that have turned away from His Face ....[47] Bahá'u'lláh

O people! Suffer not yourselves to be veiled from the Beauty of God.[48] Bahá'u'lláh

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:3

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory [Bahá'u'lláh] be over all the earth. Psalm 57:5

This is the day of vision, for the countenance of God is shining resplendent above the horizon of Manifestation.[49] Bahá'u'lláh

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! This is an Epistle from Our presence, for a remembrance of Him Who is the name of thy Lord, Him besides Whom there is none other God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise; He it is Who hath aided Thee with His Spirit ... O people! Follow the Remembrance of God that ye may be of those who are guided aright.[50] The Báb

On that Day all shall be asked concerning the covenant of the Remembrance, the name of thy Lord.[51] The Báb

The Almighty, the Wise

The following verses were revealed in Sura 62 al-Jumu'ah ("Friday"):

[2] He is the One Who has appointed a Messenger from among the common people that He may recite to them His verses, that He may purify them, and teach them the Book and wisdom—people who were before in clear error—[3] and others of them [the Messengers] who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. [4] This is of the mercy of God which He bestows on whom He will. He is the Lord of great blessings. Qur'án 62:2–4

What is the meaning of the sentence: "*and others among them who have not yet joined them*"? In other words: of the same group, there are those who have not yet joined their group.

Reflecting on verse 62:3, we see that this sentence is related to the Messengers who had not yet appeared at the time of Muḥammad. Messengers, whether they had appeared in the past or will appear in the future, are all of the same group; the only difference between them is that some have not yet

appeared in the world. Therefore, this short sentence, like many other verses of the Qur'án, informs us of the coming of Messengers after the Apostle of God.

How do the translators and interpreters of the Qur'án explain the previous verse? The majority of them say that by "others" is meant the people outside Arabia who have not yet joined Muslims. Is such an interpretation reasonable? According to the Qur'án, both groups, who have been introduced as "they" and "others", are from the same group. It says: "others of their group", meaning the same group; it does not say "others" or "others of another group". If "other people" were of the same group, they would be Muslims, not non-Muslims. If they were of "their group", meaning Muslims, there would be no need for them to join Islám.

The above theory is substantiated by the following ḥadíth related about the Prophet Muḥammad in which He connects verse 62:3 with the appearance of the Promised One from Iran. The followers of Muḥammad were curious to know what **"others of that group"** referred to. In answer, He identified this group by referring to **Salmán-i-Fársí**:

> They (the believers) said: O Apostle of God! Who are they whom God has mentioned in the Book (Qur'án)? Salman was near the Apostle of God; at that moment, Muḥammad put His hand on Salmán's leg and said: This person and his people. By the One in Whose power is my soul! If faith in God were in the star Pleiades men from Persia will bring it to earth ....*

In the above verses from Sura 62 al-Jumu'ah, several words are of special importance:

> He is the Mighty, the Wise. Qur'án 62:3

The above words are used only to describe God; what is being discussed is the Messengers not God. What, then is meant by the words after the mention of the appearance of Messengers? As we saw before, the Qur'án endows the Báb with the attributes of God:

> In truth ... in Our [God's] sight He is indeed the Exalted, the Wise. Qur'án 43:4

As we saw, the Báb confirms these titles many times:

> *This Book is, indeed, from the presence of the Exalted One, the Wise.*[52]
>
> *Thou, verily, hast followed the evil desires of those who are ignorant of the commandment of the Remnant of God, as decreed by Him Who is His servant, the Exalted, the Wise.*[53]
>
> The Báb

Sura 62 al-Jumu'ah also describes the Promised One of our age with the attributes of God, with one difference: instead of **'Alí** ("Exalted"), the word **'Azíz** ("Almighty") is used:

> He is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

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* Ḥadíth from http://dl.islamicdoc.com/Multimedia/fbook/807/00807005.htm

A study of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh reveals that He repeatedly described His Manifestation with the same attributes; in the following verse, the speaker is "the Most Great Spirit of God" Who speaks through the tongue of Bahá'u'lláh:

> *O Pen of the Ancient of Days! Recount in this Tablet that which cheereth the hearts of the sincere, and causeth every man of insight to be assured that: "Potent am I to accomplish that which I have desired; the world and all that is therein are powerless to prevent Me from whatsoever I have purposed. I am the Almighty, the All-Wise.*[54]

> *Say! Were ye to enter the Most Glorious Paradise, ye would hear the rustling of its leaves proclaim: 'Verily, I am God, there is no God but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise'.*[55] Bahá'u'lláh

> *So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: "There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise."*[56] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is an Epistle from this Wronged One, Who beareth .... every one of the most mighty Names of God.*[57] Bahá'u'lláh

Sura 50 Qáf

The last letter of the series of disconnected letters "Ḥá' Mím 'Ayn Sín Qáf", i.e. "Qáf" is the name of a Sura 50of the Qur'án:

> Qáf! I swear by the Qur'án! They are astonished that a Warner has appeared from among them. The unbelievers say: 'this is a strange thing ....' But when they face the truth, they deny it. They are a perplexed people. Qur'án 50:1–4

- Whom does "they" refer to who are surprised and also perplexed?
- Who is the "Warner" Who comes from among them?
- What "truth" do those people deny?

All these signs suggest that the people are confronted with a "Warner", meaning a Messenger, whose appearance is contrary to their expectations; in their opinion this is a strange thing; they don't know how to judge that Messenger; they are confused and perplexed.

As we discussed before, the disconnected letters of the Qur'án contain great mysteries, and it is difficult to be certain of their meaning. Nevertheless, is it possible for this sura to be in the name of the Qá'im, and a reference to the appearance of the Qá'im? First, what can we infer from the letter Qáf? A 25-year old is engaged in trade; suddenly, He claims to be the promised Qá'im. What can be more astonishing than this? Even the close relations of the Báb who knew Him well and had complete confidence in His faith, piety, intelligence, wisdom and honesty, were greatly surprised; they did not know how to judge His claim, and for this, they were perplexed.

The Summoner of God and the Call of God

> O Prophet! We have sent you ... as a Summoner to God, by His leave ... Qur'án 33:45–46

The following verses asks the people to accept the invitation of the Lord, God (Rabb):

> O our Lord! We have heard the voice of the Caller Who is calling us to believe. [He says] 'Believe in your Lord [*Rabb*]'; [the people respond] 'O Lord, we believe; forgive our sins and shortcomings; and cause us to die with the righteous. O Lord! Bestow on us what Thou promised through Thy Messengers'. Qur'án 3:193–194

Who is it that people refer to as *Rabb* ("the Lord, God")? Who is it that asks the people to believe in *Rabb*, and for the God-fearing believers to respond to His call?

The Báb has raised the Call of God, inviting us to the path of faith:

> *This, indeed is the path of the Remembrance, bearing the name of thy Lord in the Book ... Say! Fear ye God and be obedient to His command, perchance He may deal mercifully with you.*[58] The Báb

> *This, verily, is the path of thy Lord in the heavens and on the earth, He Who reciteth unto you the verses of God.*[59] The Báb

The following verses also announce the summons of the voice of the Promised One:

> The Day when the Caller will call from a near place .... That Day is the Day of coming forth. Qur'án 50:41–42

> *Verily, the appointed time hath now come, and the Cause is manifest; the Crier hath cried out, but the people are, for the most part, bereft of hearing.*[60] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Verily, the Crier hath cried out, when the promised time came ....*[61] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The call hath been raised in unnumbered places .... Whatsoever was recorded in the Scriptures of the past hath been fulfilled.*[62] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The One true God is manifestly calling the people, summoning them to the imperishable realms of eternity.*[63] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In this Day ... the Voice of God is calling aloud.*[64] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Day exclaimeth, the sun announceth the joyful tidings and the moon proclaimeth: O friends! The All-Knowing God hath come; bear ye witness unto it. The hidden Light is now manifest; hasten ye, with heart and soul, that ye may attain it. The waters give the glad-tidings, the seas leap and surge, and the groves proclaim: O My servants! Debar not yourselves from the Ocean of knowledge, and deprive not yourselves from the sun of vision. The exhilarating breezes have wafted, bestowing freshness upon the dispirited. Words cannot describe the blessings of this glorious Day, and every attempt falleth short. Happy is the servant who recognizeth the value of this Day, and testifieth to its greatness. We beseech the Incomparable Friend, at all times, not to deprive His servants of the Ocean of His bounty, and not to debar them from beholding the Sun of Truth.*[65] Bahá'u'lláh

Places mentioned as being "near" Mecca and Medina

Distances (km) from Mecca and Medina:

Mecca	'Akká (Bahjí)	1,360	Medina	'Akká (Bahjí)	1,040
"	Baghdád	1,400	"	Baghdád	1,090
"	Shíráz	1,570	"	Shíráz	1,410

The Báb proclaimed His Mission in Shíráz, and Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád; both cities are close to Mecca and Medina; therefore, "a near place" applies to both cities. Also the Shrines of the Báb (in Haifa) and of Bahá'u'lláh (at Bahjí, near 'Akká) are in Israel, a country adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula.*

> The Day when the Crier will call from a place near ... that Day is the day of coming forth.
> Qur'án 50:41–42

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* In Sura 30 ar-Rúm, concerning the vanquish of the Romans by the Persians, it is said:
In the closest land. Qur'án 30:3

Some traditions connect the phrase *"The Day the Crier will call from a near place"* to the appearance of the Qá'im; for example, the following ḥadíth in *Biḥár al-Anwár*:

> The Caller will call in the name of the Qá'im.[66]

Let us return to the verses under discussion:

> The Day when the Caller will call out from a near place; a day when they will hear the call of Truth; this Day is the Day of Coming Forth [*Khurúj*].* Qur'án 50:41–42

What does "the Day of Coming Forth" mean? This terminology has been repeatedly used in the traditions, and is equivalent to "the appearance of the Qá'im in the world". A sample of traditions that mention khurúj in reference to the appearance of the Qá'im is given below:

- *That is the Day of Khurúj (Coming Forth)*
- *The Khurúj (Coming Forth) of the Qá'im.*
- *After His Khurúj is the Hour of Resurrection.*
- *When will the Qá'im Come Forth?*
- *By the Khurúj (Coming Forth) of the Qá'im.*
- *When the Mihdí comes forth (appears).*
- *His coming forth (appearance) is like the coming forth (appearance) of the Apostle of God*[67]

Another meaning is hidden in khurúj. As we discussed in chapter 10, every Messenger appears in a particular Cave; His followers are sheltered in that Cave under the protection and support of God until the life of the ummah of that Religion ends; the shining of the light of God in that Cave ends; and the light then shines in the world from another Cave. According to the terminology of the Qur'án: "This is the Day of Khurúj"; it is the Day when the followers of the former religion step out of the old religion to take their home in the shadow of the new Faith; a new Day has begun in that "Hour"; it is the time of Resurrection, not of negligence and repose. This Way of God is changeless:

> You will find no change in Our Way. Qur'án 17:77

It has always been this way and will always be.

> We sent Moses with Our verses and signs (and decreed) that He brings His people out of darkness into light, and reminds them of the Days of God.† Qur'án 14:5

The verse below shows that, once again, the people are invited to the Way of God, and a group of them respond to the Caller:

> On that Day they [the true believers] respond to the Summoner ... Qur'án 20:108

> *Say! This, verily, is the Path of God; follow it, then, perchance He may deal mercifully with you.*[68] The Báb

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* The day they hear the Cry of Truth, that is the day of rising again. Tr. Majíd Fakhry.

† "Days of God" is a reference to our era.

In times of the appearance of the Messengers the majority of the people are busy with the affairs of the world; being entangled with a busy and noisy life, it is difficult for them to hear the Call of God:

> The Day when the Summoner shall summon to a stern ... The deniers will say: 'this is a difficult Day'. Qur'án 54:6, 8

It is a difficult day for the deniers, but by giving countless signs and proof, our kind Creator has made it very easy for the faithful believers. In the same sura, He reminds us that He has made it easy to recognize the *Dhikr* ("The Remembrance"):

> Truly We have made the Qur'án easy for [the recognition of] *Dhikr*. Qur'án 54:17

Lest we forget this reminder of our creator, **God has repeated the above verse four times in this sura**.

To deny the Promised One is the greatest insult to God; according to His testimony, such a denial has grave consequences:

> *Unto those who deny the verses of God, after He Who is God's Remembrance came unto them with signs and verses ... do thou announce a sure torment as decreed by God ... Say: The proof of God in that Book is, verily, sufficient ....*[69] The Báb

> *Should they refuse to believe in Him Who is the Remembrance of God, their faith shall never profit them, and they will be accounted among those who have joined partners with God.*[70] The Báb

"The Gate" of the Mercy of God

In Qur'án 57:13, the title of the "Báb" has been directly predicted:

> Then a wall was raised between the two groups [the believers and the deniers] which had a Gate [Báb]; within the Gate is Mercy and outside of it is torment. Qur'án 57:13

Explanation: What kind of "Gate" can be **the Gate of Mercy,** and at the same time, **the Gate of punishment**? Could we imagine any door but the Door that leads us to the Court of the Promised One?

> *Say: As to those who have entered the Gate with humble prostrations .... This is the Qá'im Whose Day all are awaiting and Whose coming hath been promised unto them ....*[71] The Báb

Numerous signs and proofs have been given in the Qur'án for the recognition of the Promised One of our age. The word Báb ("Gate, Door") in verse 57:13 is one of those signs. Here God subtly refers to the title of the Promised One, "Báb", inasmuch as His Revelation is "**a door of mercy**" for all the people of the world, particularly for Muslims. Those invited are free to accept the invitation of that Promised One to enter the new Religion of God through that "Gate of Mercy" in this world; and, in doing so, to partake of the eternal blessings of His Faith. They can also remain outside of that "Door of Mercy", eternally sorrowful and remote from the Beloved—that source of blessing and joy—shedding tears and lamenting.

The title of the Báb is also mentioned in the Psalms of David:

> This is the gate of the Lord, through which the righteous shall enter [the Faith of God] ... Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Psalms 118:20, 26

In the following utterance, the Báb invites Karím Khán-i-Kirmání and his followers to open the gate of mercy to themselves:

> *Enter the Gate with humble prostrations, that perchance it may be well with you.*[72]
> The Báb

The word "Báb" has been used many times in the Qur'án when addressing the Jewish people; they also are invited to enter the Gate of the mercy in humility and servitude:

> We said to them: Enter the Gate and prostrate yourselves. Qur'án 4:154

Is it possible that God speaks in these verses not only of the past, but also of Jewish people in the future? We must remember that the Báb invited all people and followers of all Faiths to believe in Him.

> *Wherefore have ye failed to enter this Gate and prostrate yourselves?*[73] The Báb

Sometimes the word "Báb" has been used in relation to the drunkenness and ignorance of the people who are so confused and unaware of their state that they cannot recognize the Gate of the mercy of God:

> *The unbelievers, verily, are lost in the stuper of remoteness from this Gate; they are truly lost and bewildereed.*[74]
> The Báb

The companions of the Báb were aware of the connection of verse 57:13 with the Revelation of the Promised One of God. The following utterance is from Ṭáhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn:

> They follow their own idle fancies, and fail to enter and prostrate themselves at the Gate, so as to be reckoned with those who have attained unto Him.[75]

The Tongue of Revelation addressing the Báb states:

> *O Solace of the Eye! Observe Thou the people with a keen eye. Is there any soul among them in whom Thou findest aught but the stupor of remoteness from the Most Great Mystery?*[76]
> The Báb

The "*drunkenness*" of the people refers to their ignorance of the Most Great Announcement in human history. How great the number of those who having not tasted a drop of wine, but pass their precious life in drunkenness, happy and content in their ignorance!

> You see people in drunkenness, but they are not drunk. Qur'án 22:2

> *The drunkenness of ignorance hath enveloped all the peoples of ... the earth.*[77]
> Bahá'u'lláh

We shall know God through His Words

> This is the straight Path of your Lord .... Did not Messengers come to you from among yourselves? Did They not recite to you My verses? And did They not warn

you concerning this Day? ... Indeed, that which you were promised will come to pass; you will not be able to prevent its fulfillment. Qur'án 6:126, 130, 134

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.[78] The Báb

The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.[79] Bahá'u'lláh

1 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 1. (prov. tr.)
2 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 399. (prov. tr.)
3 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 113. (prov. tr.)
4 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 151. (prov. tr.)
5 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 39. (prov. tr.)
6 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 160. (prov. tr.)
7 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 140. (prov. tr.)
8 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 378. (prov. tr.)
9 Istidlálíiyi Mukhtasar, Ṣadru'ṣṣudúr, Bahá'í Publishing, 132 BE, p. 14.
10 Bishárát-i-kutub-i-Ásemání, p. 70.
11 Ishráq-Khávarí, Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 3, p. 1213.
12 Biháru'l-Anvár Aljáme'at Lidurur Akhbár Al'a'imat Al'aṭhár—**Missing page number**
13 Má'idiyi-Ásmání, vol. 2, pp. 74–75.
14 Muḥammad-Husayní, Nuṣratu'lláh, Ḥaḍrat-i-Báb, p. 976. (prov. tr.)
15 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 3, p. 375. (prov. tr.)
16 Asráru'l-Áthár, letters 'bi' to 'thi', p. 69. (prov. tr.)
17 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 12.
18 Asráru'l-Áthár, p. 527. (prov. tr.)
19 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 338. (prov. tr.)
20 Asráru'l-Áthár, letters 'be' to 'the', p. 69. (prov. tr.)
21 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 362. (prov. tr.)
22 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 151. (prov. tr.)
23 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 152. (prov. tr.)
24 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 59.
25 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 71. (prov. tr.)
26 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 149. (prov. tr.)
27 Muhádirát, vol. 3, p. 224. (prov. tr.)
28 Kitáb'ur-Rúh, p. 362. (prov. tr.)
29 Muhádirát, vol. 1–2, p. 838.
30 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 31–33. (prov. tr.)
31 Muḥammad-Ḥusayní, Nuṣratu'lláh, Ḥaḍrat-i-Báb, p. 380. (prov. tr.)
32 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 230. (prov. tr.)
33 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 236. (prov. tr.)
34 Faizí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 151. (prov. tr.)
35 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 436. (prov. tr.)
36 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 251. (prov. tr.)
37 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 224 (paragraph 251)
38 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 229 (paragraph 258)
39 The Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 161. (prov. tr.)
40 Light of the World, # 56
41 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 13. (prov. tr.)
42 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 57 (paragraph 101)

43 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 12.
44 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 244.
45 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 31. (prov. tr.)
46 Faízí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 68. (prov. tr.)
47 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 76 (paragraph 144)
48 Má'idiyi-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 298. (prov. tr.)
49 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 21 (gr. 2.8)
50 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 105. (prov. tr.)
51 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 46. (prov. tr.)
52 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 1. (prov. tr.)
53 Abu'l-Qásim Afnán, 'Ahd-i-A'lá, p. 101. (prov. tr.)
54 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 140. (prov. tr.)
55 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, pp. 115–116. (prov. tr.)
56 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138 (no. LXXI)
57 Má'idiyi-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 82. (prov. tr.)
58 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. ?. (prov. tr.)
59 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
60 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 105. (prov. tr.)
61 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 118.
62 Má'idiyi-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 218. (prov. tr.)
63 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 324. (prov. tr.)
64 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 258.
65 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
66 Bihár'u'l-Anvár, p. 159.
67 Bisháràt-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, pp. 99, 145, 203, 204.
68 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 7. (prov. tr.)
69 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, pp. 43–44. (prov. tr.)
70 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, pp. 43–44. (prov. tr.)
71 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 164. (prov. tr.)
72 Faízí, Muḥammad 'Alí, Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 181. (prov. tr.)
73 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 84. (prov. tr.)
74 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 74. (prov. tr.)
75 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 485. (prov. tr.)
76 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 101. (prov. tr.)
77 Má'idiyi-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 108. (prov. tr.)
78 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 41.
79 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5 (no. III)

17
What do the Traditions say?

The importance of the Traditions is determined by the degree of their conformity with the verses of the Qur'án. Those Traditions that are consistent with the Qur'án, and have also been fulfilled in the Bahá'í Faith, are so numerous that they could be used to write an important portion of Bahá'í history. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have referred to some of these Traditions. For example, in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*:

> *As the people differ in their understanding and station, We will accordingly make mention of a few traditions, that these may impart constancy to the wavering soul, and tranquillity to the troubled mind. Thereby, will the testimony of God unto the people, both high and low, be complete and perfect.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'í scholars and writers have also mentioned such traditions in their books of proofs and reasoning. This author does not have access to the original sources of the traditions, except for the volume 13 of *Bahár'ul-Anwár*. Whatever has been discussed in this book is derived from the works of Bahá'í authors; and as such, I am indebted to their efforts; it is befitting to mention the names of some of these scholars and their works:

Author	Writings
Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání	*Fará'id*
Ṣadru'ṣ-Ṣudúr	*Istidláliya-i-Mukhtaṣar*
'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávarí	*Qámús-i-Íqán*
"	*Jannátu'n-Na'ím*
Ḥusám Nuqabá'í	*Bishárát-i-Kutub-i-Muqaddasih*
Unknown	*Bishárát*
Ál-Aḥmad	*Tibyán va Burhán*

The Báb instructed forty of His companions each to write a booklet or pamphlet in proof of His Cause.[2]

There are several subjects in the Traditions used by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Íqán concerning the Faith of the Báb. For example, that the promised Qá'im:

- Like the Apostle of God, He reveals new laws
- Will disclose many truths and mysteries
- Is of the tribe of Banú-Háshim
- Is a youth
- Most of His enemies are religious leaders
- His revelation and recognition of Him is a challenge to the Arabs
- Whatever the promised Mihdí states, the divines and religious leaders consider false
- His followers are oppressed; many of them are murdered in a most cruel fashion
- The murderers of His followers are of "Persian descent"
- The divines and leaders of that time are the most wicked

- That Promised One proclaims His mission in the year 60*

After the mention of the above traditions, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *Consider the way of the people. They ignore these well-founded traditions, all of which have been fulfilled, and cling unto those of doubtful validity, and ask why these have not been fulfilled.*[3]

Later, Bahá'u'lláh reminds us that if some of the traditions appear not to have been fulfilled, the believers should not be dismayed, *"that they may rather attribute their perplexity to their own lack of understanding, ... should rather seek enlightenment from them who are the recognized Expounders thereof, so that the hidden mysteries may be unravelled, and be made manifest unto them."*[4]

As mentioned many times in this book, the Messengers of God have never appeared in ways that people expected. The reason for the denial of the people has always been the misunderstanding of the prophecies and glad-tidings given in the heavenly scriptures. To better understand the consequences of the misinterpretation of such announcements, it may be helpful to offer an example. The appearance of the Messengers is like the rising of the sun. Is there any difficulty in seeing the sun? The sun is one million-three-hundred times larger than the earth; however, a cloud can veil the face of the sun. People's false expectations are similar to a cloud; they can utterly block the power of human perception. Even if a Messenger appears with a thousand true signs and proofs, having one false expectation can prevent people from recognizing Him. The believers see that false expectation as a cloud, and are unable to see the Sun of the glory and majesty of God's Messenger.

For the Shí'ih, the most important authority on traditions related to the appearance of the Qá'im is volume 13 of *Biḥár al-Anwár*, compiled by Allámah Majlisí. This book has twice been translated into Persian. In order to understand the role of the Shí'ih leaders in relation to the Bahá'í Faith, it is necessary to take a look at the introduction of the *Biḥár al-Anwár* by the second translator. Note the instruction given by Áyatu'lláh Burújirdí to the second translator of that book:

> "Study the books of the misguided sect [Bahá'ís]
>
> . Anywhere they write: 'In the 13 Biḥár, Majlisí has said ... 'You explain in the introduction or footnote that it is not so, and for this and that reason the ḥadíth is weak or unknown, or something has been dropped from it or has been added, or the previous translation has been vague or hard to understand, and the real ḥadíth is not the one that they [the Bahá'ís] are presenting ...."[5]

What would you infer from this instruction of Áyatu'lláh Burújirdí? The traditions are the utterances of the honorable Prophet and the Imams, which are over a thousand years old, and have been recorded in many books for a long time. *Biḥár al-Anwár* is a compilation of the traditions related to the promised Qá'im, which have been collected and distributed over 300 years ago.

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* In *Qámús-i-Íqán*, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Ishráq-Khávaí (a Bahá'í scholar) describes all the traditions mentioned in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*.

Many believers may read about a subject without thinking about what they read. For this reason, the Qur'án explicitly asks us:

> Do you not think? Qur'án 6:50

It is worthwhile to think a little about the instruction of the Áyatu'lláh and examine what was his intention. It is clear that he wanted to neutralize those traditions that have been fulfilled by the Revelation of the Bahá'í Faith. To achieve his purpose, he gave the translator of the *Biḥár al-Anwár* five instructions in order that the Shí'ih community may lose its confidence in those traditions. He instructs the translator to state regarding those traditions related to the Bahá'í Faith:

- For this or that reason that ḥadíth is weak or unknown.
- Matters have been omitted from that ḥadíth.
- Matters have been added to the ḥadíth.
- The old translation of *Biḥár al-Anwár* is not reliable.
- Not all these traditions are correct. The original of the ḥadíth is this ..., not what they present.

What does this series of instructions accomplish? Is it not an attempt to invent traditions? Actions like this have been common among Muslims from old. The Áyatu'lláh is saying: "Tell the Muslims that 'the original ḥadíth is this ..., not that which they present'". The Bahá'ís only offer the traditions recorded in *Biḥár al-Anwár*. If the originals of the traditions are not in the *Biḥár al-Anwár* then where are the 'originals' of these traditions? Are these traditions only in the possession of the Bahá'ís that they may be able to remove portions of them, or add portions to them? It is surprising that the second translator, without realizing its implication, has included the historic instruction of the Áyatu'lláh in his introduction to the *Biḥár al-Anwár*.

In the Qur'án, the subject of distortion (alteration) of the Word of God has been repeatedly discussed; for example, in the following verse:

> They alter the Word from its true meaning [they present the Word of God in other than it true form]. Qur'án 5:41

Are not the instructions of the Áyatu'lláh an order to alter the utterances of the honorable Apostle and the Imams?

It appears that the previous translator of the *Biḥár al-Anwár* had been impartial. Áyatu'lláh Burújirdí instructs the second translator to take care, as much as possible, to distort the meaning of the utterances; so that the events of Bahá'í history are not in conformity with them. The following verse addresses such concealers:

> O people of the Book! A Messenger has come to you that He may disclose to you many truths from the Book, which you have kept secret. Qur'án 5:15

> A day will come when nothing can be more hidden than truth and honesty, and nothing more evident than dishonesty and accusation of falsehood towards God and His Messenger.[6] Imám 'Alí

Since the traditions have an important role for Muslims, it is worthwhile to examine them with respect to the new Faith of God. According to Bahá'u'lláh's utterances, the study of such traditions that are in conformity with the verses of the Qur'án increases our confidence and certitude.

1. The view of the people towards the Qur'án

> In the sight of the people of that time no merchandise is of lesser value than the Qur'án, that is read with truth and honesty ... It is as though they are the leaders of the Qur'án, and not the Qur'án being their leader and guide.[7] Imám 'Alí

2. The people's impiety

> They abandon religion, like an arrow leaving the bow.[8] Imám 'Alí

3. The spread of knowledge in the age of the Qá'im

> In the time of the Qá'im, the believer is in the East but can see his brother in the west; he may also be in the West and see his brother in the East.[9] Imám Ṣádiq

4. The homeland of the Promised Mihdí

> The All-Praised, Almighty God ... blesses the Persian people by bestowing this Religion on them.[10] Imám Riḍá

> If Religion be in the star Pleiades men from Persia will obtain it.[11] The Apostle of God

5. The lineage of the Promised Qá'im

> Mihdí is of my lineage and a descendent of Fáṭimah.[12]

> The Apostle of God, peace be upon Him, said: The Qá'im is of My descendants.[13]

6. The age of the Promised Qá'im

> The difficulty is that their Qá'im appears at a young age, whereas they are expecting Him to be of old age.[14] Imám Ṣádiq

7. The duration of the reign of the Qá'im

> The duration of the reign of the Qá'im is nineteen years and a few months.[15] Imám Ṣádiq

The Báb declared His Mission in AH 1260 (AD 1844), in Shiraz; and after nineteen years and a few months, in the year AH 1280 (AD 1863), Bahá'u'lláh declared His Cause in Baghdád.

8. The black standard

> When you see the black standards leading from Khorasan, go to meet them even if you have to drag yourselves on snow; inasmuch as, under these flags you will find Mihdí, the Representative of God.[16] The Apostle of God

> The companions of His Holiness Mihdí, may God hasten His coming, will be 313, the same number as the fighters of the battle of Badr.[17] Imám Báqir

The above prophecies were fulfilled during the time of the Báb. According to historical documents:

> Mullá Ḥusayn [the first to believe in the Báb] returned to Mashhad, after a stay of a few days in the camp .... Suddenly a trusted courier came from the presence of the Báb, and gave Mullá Ḥusayn the Báb's green turban He hath sent for Mullá Ḥusayn to use; the Báb had instructed Mullá Ḥusayn to don that turban, and had given him a new name, Siyyid 'Alí; he and his companions together with Quddús were to hoist black standards and go to the Jazíriy-i-Khaḍrá' [Verdant Isle] meaning Mázindarán and the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí.
>
> In obedience to the instructions of the Báb, on 19th of Sha'bán AH 1264, Mullá Ḥusayn together with 202 companions headed for Mázindarán. Whatever city or village they passed on their way; they proclaimed the new Cause to the people; in every location a few people joined these companions; they continued until they reached the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí; their number was then 313. As it has been mentioned in Nabíl's Narrative: "the number of the companions was 313. When Quddús became aware of this number, he stated: All that the Apostle of God had revealed concerning the promised Qá'im has been manifested that the proof of God be complete for the religious leaders who consider themselves the source of knowledge regarding the interpretation of the Islamic traditions.[18]

9. The fate of Ádhirbayján

The Báb's places of imprisonment were two mountainside fortresses in Ádhirbayján, the first being near the town of Máh-Kú and and the second near Chihríq, both far from populous or administrative areas. He was tried in Tabriz and martyred in that city. He did not sanction plans by His followers to rescue Him from the grasp of His enemies. He told them: "the mountains of Ádhirbayján also have a right." His destiny was to be martyred. Nothing could prevent His martyrdom. Imám Ṣádiq foretold this event:

> In Ádhirbayján an event is destined for us that nothing can prevent.[19]

Karím Khán-i-Kirmání, the religious leader who was an obstinate enemy of the Bahá'í Faith, in his book, *Irshádu'l-'Awám*, wrote the following about Mullá Muḥammad Mamaqání, one of the Mujtahids who signed the verdict for the execution of the Báb:

> After the Báb entered his home, Mullá Muḥammad Mamaqání turned to Him and asked: "Are these Books and Epistles in your handwriting?" The Báb glanced at them and answered: "Yes, they are Mine and are in My handwriting." Mamaqání asked: "Do You confess and acknowledge the accuracy of their contents? Are they accurate?" The Báb responded: "Yes, I confess and acknowledge all these." Again Mamaqání asked: "Are You insisting on Your claim of being the Qá'im, and that You are the expected Promised One and the well-known of the descendants of Muḥammad?" The Báb responded: "Yes, I am the One you have been expecting." Mamaqání said: "By this confession your execution is necessitated!"[20]

10. The Bahá'í World Center in the Holy Land

Some of those who write in opposition to the Bahá'í Faith connect the locating of the Bahá'í World Center in Israel as a sign of the machinations of foreign countries. They are ignorant that its location is in accordance with God's plan and politics; inasmuch as the third most sacred site (after Mecca and

Medina) in the world blessed by the Qur'án is the area around the al-Masjid al-Aqṣá (the Mosque of Aqṣá) in Jerusalem. The Bahá'í World Center—in the city of Haifa—is 117 km north of this mosque:

> Praise be to the One [God] Who brought His Servant [Muḥammad] from the Sacred Mosque [al-Masjid al-Ḥarám] to the farthest Mosque [al-Aqṣá Mosque, Jerusalem], the surrounding of which We have blessed, that We may show it some of Our signs. Verily He [God] is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. Qur'án 17:1

A mystery is hidden in the sentence "We may show it Our signs". Just as the Mosque of Aqṣa was blessed by the spiritual presence of Muḥammad during the "The Night Journey" (Sura 17 al-Isrá'), its surroundings will again be blessed by the presence of another Messenger. God's special favor to that Holy Land has also been confirmed in traditions; for example, the following utterance in *Biḥár al-Anwár*:

> On that Day, the Holy Land will be the best place to reside; a time shall come when all people will wish to be residents of that land.[21]

Many Bahá'í believers, following their pilgrimage to the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith in Haifa, travel to Jerusalem, and remembering "the journey of Mi'ráj",* they ascend to "the Mosque of Aqṣá" and seek blessing from that holy soil.

Those who write disparaging books about the Bahá'í Faith should know that people like them fulfill the prophecy of the Qur'án; inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to that land, with the co-operation and decrees of two despotic Muslim kings—Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz and Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh. Bahá'u'lláh did not choose to move to 'Akká. Why, among thousands of ancient cities, would the name of an obscure and desolate city such as 'Akká be mentioned and be praised by the Messengers? How did Bahá'u'lláh's exile from Ṭihrán lead to 'Akká?

In his *Futúḥát-i-Makkíya* ("Openings of Makkah"), Ibn 'Arabí also speaks of the arrival of the Promised One in 'Akká;† he then alludes to His (Bahá'u'lláh's) objective, in complete conformity with the verses of the Qur'án.

> The Religion is risen, and the spirit of life is breathed into the body of Islám. Islám is glorified after its abasement, and is revived following its death.[22]

The separation of the spirit of life from the body of each ummah has been repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'án. Is there any reason why the Muslim ummah should be an exception to this rule?

> Every ummah has a fixed term [an end] Qur'án 7:34

There are many traditions that praise the city of 'Akká, such as the following ḥadíth that is included in a booklet named "The Merits of Akka and Askelon"; this ḥadíth is also quoted by Bahá'u'lláh:

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* Mi'ráj, ladder or stairs.

† A tradition describes 'Akká as "The plain of 'Akká, the Banquet Hall of God." In this obscure city, "the heavenly food", i.e. God's verses, have been revealed for man, and spread over the entire world.

Blessed the man that hath visited 'Akká, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of 'Akká.[23]

11. Iranian massacre of the followers of the Qá'im

In the Kitáb-i-Íqán and in many other of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the oppression against the believers in the new Faith:

In most of the places their blessed blood hath been shed; in every city they have been made captives, have been paraded throughout the provinces, and some have been burnt with fire.[24] Bahá'u'lláh

Then He cites the following ḥadíth that has prophesied these events:

"Who will slay them?" I asked. He made reply: "The children of Persia!"[25]

12. Disputes about the Qá'im

We gave Moses the Book; the people disputed over it. Qur'án 11:110

Imám Muḥammad Báqir, in an interpretation of the above verse has said:

He said: They disputed about it, just as this ummah disputed about the Book; and soon they shall dispute regarding the Book brought to them by the Qá'im; moreover, many people will deny Him.[26]

13. Treatment of the Qá'im by the people

When the Qá'im arises, people who are more ignorant than those who resisted the Apostle of God will resist Him .... Our Qá'im will rise at a time when the people will misinterpret the Book of God according to their false beliefs.[27] Imám Ṣádiq

When the unbelievers hear the news of the appearance of the Qá'im, they will imagine it to be a fable.[28] Imám Ṣádiq

14. Treatment of the Qá'im by the divines and doctors of religion

When He [the Qá'im] appears, the doctors of religion gird themselves up to murder Him; and if the Mihdí does not have a sword He will be killed.[29]

Out of Banú Háshim there shall come forth a Youth Who shall reveal new laws. He shall summon the people unto Him, but none will heed His call. Most of His enemies will be the divines. His bidding they will not obey, but will protest saying: 'This is contrary to that which hath been handed down unto us by the Imáms of the Faith.'[30]

Most of what doth befall Him is inflicted by the divines.[31]

Most of His laws will be opposed to the ways of the divines.[32]

The traditions alone cannot be the proof of any religion; inasmuch as we cannot be certain of their accuracy. However, if they conform to the verses of the Qur'án, as Bahá'u'lláh has stated, this will increase the level of our confidence and certitude in them. It is for this reason alone that the traditions have been mentioned in this chapter.

We shall know God by His Words

Say: This is the Day in which the sun of spiritual discernment is shining forth in the heaven of true understanding. Blessed is he that hath perceived and recognized it. Whatsoever was foretold in former times hath now been fulfilled.[33] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever hath been recorded and lay concealed in al the Books of God hath, in this Day, been made manifest and evident. No excuse is left for anyone, unless he should speak from his own fancies and desires.[34] Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by God! This is not from Me, but from Him Who hath sent Me, in truth, and made Me a sign of mercy unto the world.[35] Bahá'u'lláh

By the effulgent rays of the Sun of Truth! If anyone should forfeit his chance in this Day, he shall never be aided to make amends for it.[36] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 237–238.
2 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 65.
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 239
4 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 256
5 Mihdí-i-Maw'úd (translation of the vol. 13 of Biḥáru'l-Anvár), introduction to the book
6 Irshádu'l-Qulúb, translation by Riḍá'i, vol. 2, p. 287.
7 Irshádu'l-Qulúb, translation by Riḍá'i, vol. 2, p. 287.
8 Irshád'ul-Qulúb, translation by Riḍá'i, vol. 2, p. 287.
9 Mihdí-i-Maw'úd, translation of the vol. 13 of Biḥáru'l-Anvár, p. 1141.
10 Biḥáru'l-Anvár al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 24, p. 313.
11 Uṣúl-i-Káfí, translation by Mustafaví, vol. 2, p. 217.
12 Biḥáru'l-Anvár al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 51, p. 75.
13 Biḥáru'l-Anvár al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 51, p. 73.
14 Biḥáru'l-Anvár al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 52, p. 287.
15 Mihdí-i-Maw'úd, translation of the vol. 13 of Biḥáru'l-Anvár, p. 1089.
16 Biḥáru'l-Anvár Al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 51, p. 82.
17 Iḥtijáját, the translation of vol. 4 of Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 1 p. 69.
18 Bishárát, p. 94–95.
19 The late Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn-i-Muḥammad Valí Urúmiyyih, translation of the vol. 13 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, compiled by Allámiy-i-Majlesí, p. 436.
20 Bishárát, pp. 90–91.
21 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 13, printed 1332, p. 156.
22 Fará'id, p. 51.
23 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 179.
24 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 245 (gr275)
25 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 247 (gr276)
26 Biḥáru'l-Anvár Al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 24, p. 313.
27 The late Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn-i-Muḥammad Valí Urúmiyyih, translation of the vol. 13 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, compiled by Allámiy-i-Majlesí, p. 616.
28 Mihdí-i-Maw'úd, translation of the volume 13 of Biḥáru'l-Anvár, p. 263.
29 Fuṣúṣ Al-Ḥukm, Ibn-i-'Arabí, p. 85.
30 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 243 (gr273)—Baha'u'llah quoting a tradition
31 Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 1, p. 188. (prov. tr.)
32 www.alhikmeh.com/arabic/mktba/aqaed/Imám12/index.htm
33 The Bahá'í World, vol. 18, pp. 967–968.
34 Majmú'iy-i-Mubárakih Az Athar-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, pp. 288–289. (prov. tr.)
35 The Kitáb-i-Badí, p. 324. (prov. tr.)
36 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 230. (prov. tr.)

Part 8
The meaning of Resurrection and Hour

This part consists of three chapters:

18. The spiritual life
19. The meaning of Resurrection and the Hour
20. Resurrection and Hour in the Qur'án

O servants! Lifeless is the body that is bereft of a soul, and withered the heart that is devoid of the remembrance of its Lord. Commune with the remembrance of the Friend and shun the enemy. Your enemy is such things as ye have acquired of your own inclination, to which ye have firmly clung, and whereby ye have sullied your souls. The soul hath been created for the remembrance of the Friend; safeguard its purity. The tongue hath been created to bear witness to God; pollute it not with the mention of the wayward.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believe in me will never die. John 11:25–26

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 68 (gr.4.5)

18
Spiritual life

O servants! Not every mortal frame hath a spirit or is imbued with life. In this day he is endowed with spirit who with all his heart seeketh the abode of the Beloved.[1]
Bahá'u'lláh

Vouchsafe Thy strength, O Almighty One, unto Thy weak creatures, and quicken them who are as dead, that haply they may find Thee, and may be led unto the ocean of Thy guidance ...[2]
Bahá'u'lláh

Abundant use has been made of allegorical words in the Qur'án and other heavenly scriptures. Comprehension of the Word of God is only possible if we study the inner significances of these words. One reason for the denial of the Messengers of God has been the misinterpretation of such words. Note the following example in which the word "life" is used when "spiritual life" is intended, even though no mention is made of "spiritual":

He Who is the Pre-Existent is come, that He may bestow everlasting life, and grant eternal preservation[3]
Bahá'u'lláh

The primary purpose of the Messengers is to inspire our spiritual development and promote the eternal happiness of our spirit, rather than the health and preservation of our body. What would be the benefit of a long life, if we did not possess a praiseworthy character? Of what use is an "eternal animal"? The reason for our life in this world is not to imitate or compete with animals; inasmuch as the animal, without any aspiration or effort is a perfect example of "animal nature". Our purpose is to ascend above the animal level by acquiring human perfections and virtues. Attaining such a goal is impossible without the recognition of the Promised One of the age—He Who is God's Mouthpiece.

Whoso hath not breathed the sweet fragrance of the Beloved at this dawntide is indeed accounted among the dead.[4]
Bahá'u'lláh

Whoso saves it [the life of one person], it is as though he hath saved the whole of humanity.
Qur'án 5:32

We then caused you to come alive after ye had died, perchance ye may be grateful.
Qur'án 2:56

Wherefore do ye blaspheme God? Ye were dead, He revived you; He then caused you to die, and again restored you to life; ye shall then return unto Him.
Qur'án 2:28

Thou canst surely not cause the dead and the deaf to hear thy call, when they have turned away from thee; nor canst thou lead the blind out of their error. Thou canst make none to hear save them that believe in Our verses, and have surrendered their will to God.
Qur'án 27:80–81

Wherein [in hellfire] he will neither die nor live.
Qur'án 87:13

Jesus told one of His followers:

> Let the dead bury their own dead .... Luke 9:60

Ḥamzih ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the uncle of Muḥammad, attained eternal life because of his belief in the Religion of God. The following verse of the Qur'án is about him:

> Is one whom We revived when he was dead, and placed a light in his path that he may walk by it among the people, like the one who is in darkness in such wise that he cannot exit it? Qur'án 6:122

In the above verse, being given life has been likened to walking in the light, and lack of faith to being imprisoned in a tight, dark place. According to the following verse, the deniers of Islám ridiculed the believers saying:

> Were we dust and were given a new life? These are the people who reject their Lord. Qur'án 13:5

It should be obvious that the deniers were not dust, and had not found new life; nevertheless, in order to mock the Word of God, they resorted to such ridiculous talk, because they were hearing from the believers in Islám that whoever accepts that Faith will obtain a new life.

The appearance of the Messengers of God begins a spiritual Spring in the world, and breathes a new life into all souls. Those who are asleep on the bed of hopelessness and ignorance are free to welcome the arrival of this divine Springtime with joy and enthusiasm, or continue to remain asleep in the dark winter of sorrow on their bed of negligence.

> *Say: By God! This is that Springtime which hath bedecked Paradise, a Spring which shall never be followed by autumn.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

The season of spring awakens the plants and brings the animals out of their nests into the gardens and meadows. The divine Springtime, which begins with the revelation of a new Messenger, brings out diverse responses from humanity. Some welcome the new Season with joy and eagerness, and celebrate its arrival. Others ignore this New Day as they continue to think that the Winter has not ended and a New Year has not begun. Another group of people have been so accustomed to the cold of Winter that, on hearing the news of the coming of Spring, they are filled with fear and trembling. With the help of others, such people even try to prevent the appearance of that lovely Season; they try to veil, with their cold and depressing thoughts, the magnificence, glory and wonder of its beautiful face.

> *We have verily made the world anew through the breezes of Revelation, and have manifested the Divine Springtime; but most of the people comprehend not.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

According to the utterances of the Messengers of God, people who celebrate the arrival of the Springtime and fill their spirit with its splendor and joy, attain a new life, and in both worlds, are reckoned among the living.

> The believer is alive in both worlds.[7]

Whoso believeth in God, in this Most Great Revelation, shall never die. I swear by God! He shall live eternally in the Kingdom of God, the Almighty, the Most Exalted.[8]
Bahá'u'lláh

Whoever closes his eyes to the straight Path of God, his ears from hearing the call of God, and his mouth from the praise of His Messenger, in the Day of Resurrection, both in this world and the next, will be considered among the blind, deaf and dumb.

Whosoever God shall guide is of the guided; and those who are misled ... in the Day of Resurrection shall be gathered blind, deaf and dumb. Qur'án 17:97

Whoso is spiritually blind in this life shall be blind in the next life. Qur'án 17:72

O ye who are believers! When God and His Messenger call you to that which is the Source of life, respond favorably and know that God cometh between man and his heart; and ye shall be gathered to Him. Qur'án 8:24

God is forever present and intervening in our hearts to see who is worthy of attaining to belief. The gift of faith is in His hands. He bestows it upon those who would appreciate the value of this bounty. God will deprive those unworthy of such an honor.

According to the Bahá'í teachings "Paradise" means "nearness" to God, and "Hell" means "separation or remoteness" from God. In other words, Paradise means living in joy, and Hell means the sorrow of remoteness from the Source of all happiness. The word "fire" is related to the inner feelings, not to physical burning of our body.

... a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. ... the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire.[9] Bahá'u'lláh

Our purpose in coming to this physical world is to gain the gem of faith and spiritual life. According to God's testimony, some people do not know the value of time and, in their quickly passing life, deprive themselves of the reviving breezes of the eternal Spring. It is as though they have never lived in this world; they have never heard the songs of the heavenly Nightingale, and have had no share of the flower-laden rose-garden of life. Their story is like that of a hungry person sitting, tired and helpless, in a garden full of delicious fruits hanging from the trees; and instead of looking at the sweet fruits, he has fixed his gaze on the ground; by his own choice he has deprived himself of all the gifts and favors. Therefore, the lovers of the Spring are given life twice, once in this world and again in the next world; whereas the seekers after winter remain lifeless and die a second death.

According to God's testimony, the abode of the spiritually living is, in both worlds, the eternal Paradise; and the home of the spiritually dead is, in both worlds, the fire of Hell. It has always been God's Will for humans to attain their longed-for desire. Both groups will attain what they desire: those who have clung to the Winter and are uneasy about the coming of the Spring, and those who are lovers of the Spring and count the hours in expectation.

God is the most gracious; He wants the Spring for all His servants, and calls them all to the eternal Paradise.

> God summoneth the people to the Abode of Peace. Qur'án 10:25

> *O people! ... The promise hath in truth been fulfilled. Haste, then, that ye may attain the Garden where the Countenance of God shineth resplendent. Beware lest ye deprive yourselves and your eyes from the Presence of God.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

> *GOD hath, at all times and under all conditions, been wholly independent of His creatures. He hath cherished and will ever cherish the desire that all men may attain His gardens of Paradise ....*[11] The Báb

However, based on His rule of justice and fairness, in this heavenly Festival, God will show the path to "the Abode of Peace" and "the Garden of Paradise" only to those who respond, with heart and soul, to the Call of His Promised One:

> He shall guide whosoever He willeth to the straight Path. Qur'án 10:25

Imagine you were holding a magnificent festival, and through kindness and a good heart invited a group of hopeless and distressed people to that great festival. A number of the invitees accepted your invitation, but another group mockingly threw away the invitation and banded together to torment and harm you, and ruin your glorious festival; they even strove to kill you and your beloved guests. How would you treat such people? Would you later invite these same ungrateful tyrants to another celebration? According to the plan of creation, only those who love the season of spring will enjoy the beauty and purity of this season, while those who are the enemies of spring will shun it. People are free to choose whatever path and objective they desire for themselves; if they did not have the privilege of free choice, they would not be human.

Other creatures are compelled to welcome Naw Rúz—the Persian New Year that coincides with the start of spring in the northern hemisphere. With the approach of the spring, the nightingales lose themselves in its beauty and sing of the mystery of love to the new blossoms. With great passion and delight, by day and by night, they sing the praises of the designer of all these beauties .

Consider with what soul-stirring and beautiful language God invites us to seize our chance, step out of the abode of negligence and ignorance, and be refreshed by the Spring showers:

> *O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which, in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime, are being showered upon you. The Day Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

The arrival of a Spring season is not unique. Every Messenger of God Who has manifested Himself has begun a spiritual Springtime in the souls, and has established a great Resurrection in the world. Every Messenger of God Who has stepped into the world has given people the freedom to accept and drink the

overflowing cup of Life, or ignore their spiritual thirst and refuse the heavenly Cup:

> Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Revelation 22:17

> Those who invoke a Beloved other than God ... are even as dead, deprived of the spirit of life. Qur'án 16:20–21

> I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25–26

The same is true in this age:

> *Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been re-born in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live.*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

As we have seen, every ummah is faced with an end; there are no exceptions to this rule. This rule is so certain and well-defined that it will not be delayed or hastened even by an hour:

> For every Ummah there is a time limit; when its end is come it shall not be delayed nor shall it be hastened, by even an hour. Qur'án 10:49

> Is it not clear to those who inherit the earth after its inhabitants [former possessor]), that should We wish, We shall make them suffer the consequences of their sins, and place a seal on their hearts that they shall not be able to hear? Qur'án 7:100

In every age a group of people are the heirs to the grace and bounty of God. When a new Messenger of God appears in the world, the believers of a former religion forfeit their spiritual inheritance, and should they reject the Promised One, they shall be deprived of "**the spirit of faith**". At the time of Muḥammad this inheritance was in the hands of Christians; in our time, this inheritance is in the hands of Muslims. If they accept the new Promised One, their inheritance will again be theirs; otherwise they will forfeit it.

The denial of God's Promised One is the greatest insult to God. What would be the consequence of such a serious offence? According to the decree and wisdom of God, the just punishment for its perpetrators is to be deprived of spiritual life and to be remote from the favors and mercy of God. Can a more just punishment than this be imagined for such an affront?

Let us see what is the meaning of justice. Justice implies carrying a responsibility in proportion to one's capability. Every person must carry such a load; this is God's firm decree; no one can be exempted from this responsibility. The heavier the load the greater is the reward for accepting it, and the greater the punishment for rejecting it. The heaviest load is on the backs of religious leaders; otherwise there would be no justice.

> We do not burden any soul beyond its ability. Qur'án 7:42

We love our brief life on earth, and are so afraid of death that we even avoid contact with the dead. However, we never fully reflect upon the grave

consequences of "**eternal death**". We consider the killing of a person a serious crime. Are we at all aware that preventing people from attaining the "**spirit of faith**" is also a great crime, even greater than taking their physical life? How great the number of men and women who have become an obstacle to their spouse or their children, preventing them from attaining true faith! How great the number of religious leaders who prevent their followers from searching after the "Great News", unaware that they are committing a greater sin than any that can be imagined!

> *The death of faith is more grievous than physical death .... And it is, likewise,, more severe than the destruction of the body. For this reason, an appropriate punishment is required for such a deadly action.*[14]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Such is the importance of spiritual murder: Our life in this mortal world is swiftly passing; it is as a 'twinkling of the eye' compared to eternity.

Our Creator loves us, and, to express this love, He has bestowed the mantle of life upon us, and has adorned us with His Own Beauty and likeness. We reciprocate this pure love by accepting His Messenger, Who continually calls us to abandon the winter of remoteness, and turn toward the new Spring, to be joyous through the life-giving breezes of this wondrous Dawn.

> *Seize your chance, that ye may have a portion of this breeze through which all created things have been made new, and the spirit of everlasting life was breathed upon every moldering bone.*[15]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The following is an apt description by Ṭáhirih, the peerless poet:

> Wake up, sleeper! Your lover's come for you!
> Rouse yourself, crush those cobwebs from your hair
>
> Gentle Love is here, and brings you kindness
> Miserable lover, your Love stands near
>
> Comfort awaits at the side of your bed
> Sit up, throw off your grief—not one more tear!
>
> Suffering, separate, lying there cold,
> embrace your lover, who loves without fear
>
> Wan and wasted, starved to death by the Fall,
> Get up! At last the Spring is here
>
> Our time's renewed, for life is always new
> Rise! Rise up! You corpse of that old, dead year![16]

We shall know God through His Words

> *He is truly wise whom the world and all that is therein have not deterred from recognizing the light of this Day, who will not allow men's idle talk to cause him to swerve from the way of righteousness. He is indeed as one dead who, at the wondrous dawn of this Revelation, hath failed to be quickened by its soul-stirring breeze. He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires.*

O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

All that which existeth in the kingdoms of earth and heaven is but a reflection and image of the hidden worlds of God; but the heedless yearn after and pursue these images and reflections. Thus, they hasten after them for a hundred thousand years; in the end, in utter despair, they turn to dust.[18] Bahá'u'lláh

O YE THAT ARE LYING AS DEAD ON THE COUCH OF HEEDLESSNESS! Ages have passed and your precious lives are well-nigh ended, yet not a single breath of purity hath reached Our court of holiness from you. Though immersed in the ocean of misbelief, yet with your lips ye profess the one true faith of God. Him whom I abhor ye have loved, and of My foe ye have made a friend. Notwithstanding, ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you. Were ye but to open your eyes, ye would, in truth, prefer a myriad griefs unto this joy, and would count death itself better than this life.[19] Bahá'u'lláh

IN THE NAME OF THE ONE TRUE GOD

Praise be to the all-perceiving, the ever-abiding Lord Who, from a dewdrop out of the ocean of His grace, hath reared the firmament of existence, adorned it with the stars of knowledge, and admitted man into the lofty court of insight and understanding. This dewdrop, which is the Primal Word of God, is at times called the Water of Life, inasmuch as it quickeneth with the waters of knowledge them that have perished in the wilderness of ignorance.[20] Bahá'u'lláh

O servant of God! We have bestowed a dewdrop from the ocean of divine grace; *would that men might drink therefrom! We have brought a trace of the sweet melodies of the Beloved; would that men might hearken with their inner ear! Soar upon the wings of joy in the atmosphere of the love of God. Regard the people of the world as dead and seek the fellowship of the living. Whoso hath not breathed the sweet fragrance of the Beloved at this dawntide is indeed accounted among the dead. He Who is the All-Sufficing proclaimeth aloud: "The realm of joy hath been ushered in; be not sorrowful! The hidden mystery hath been made manifest; be not disheartened!" Wert thou to apprehend the surpassing greatness of this Day, thou wouldst renounce the world and all that dwell therein and hasten unto the way that leadeth to the Lord.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

Hearken, with your inner ears, to the Voice of the Desire of all nations, for it quickeneth and conferreth everlasting life.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 69 (gr.4.8)
2 Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah, p. 252 (no. CLX)
3 *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81.
4 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (gr.5.7)
5 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 316. (prov. tr.)
6 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 108. (prov. tr.)
7 This is a well-known tradition.
8 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 21. (prov. tr.)
9 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 70–71 (no. XXIX)
10 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, pp. 297–298. (prov. tr.)
11 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.
12 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 167 (no. LXXXV)

13 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 213 (no. CVI)
14 Safíniy-i-Irfán, vol. 12, p. 17—prov. tr.
15 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 316. (prov. tr.)
16 *Ṭáhirih: A Portrait in Poetry*, p. 75 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2005)
17 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 168–169 (no. LXXXV)
18 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 119. (prov. tr.)
19 The Hidden Words (Persian) by Baha'u'llah, pp. 28–29 (no. 20)
20 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 3 (gr.1.1)
21 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (gr.5.7)
22 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 328. (prov. tr.)

19
The meaning of Resurrection and Hour

Verily, its (the Qur'án) gathering is upon Us .... Then its explanation is also upon Us. Qur'án 75:17, 19

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have removed the veil from many mysteries of the Qur'án. Based on the explanations of these two Promised Ones, this chapter briefly presents the explanations related to the Resurrection and the Hour.

A study of the divine Scriptures shows that "**Resurrection**" and "**Hour**", and similar or related words have been used to express two different meanings, sometimes a "literal" meaning and at other times an inner or "allegorical" meaning:

Resurrection

"**Literal**" meaning	To stand before the Balance of God's justice in the eternal world
"**Allegorical**" meaning	To stand before the Balance of the justice of the Messenger of God in this world

Hour

"**Literal**" meaning	The time of facing, in the eternal world, the consequences of our actions in this world
"**Allegorical**" meaning	The time of facing the Summon of the Promised One of God in this world—the Messenger of God[1]

When the Qá'im riseth, that day is the Day of Resurrection ....[2] Imám Báqir

... in the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation.[3] Bahá'u'lláh

I am the resurrection and the life .... Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John 11:25–26

*The Resurrection of the Bayán will occur at the time of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest.** [4] The Báb

It hath been demonstrated and definitely established, through clear evidences, that by "Resurrection" is meant the rise of the Manifestation of God to proclaim His Cause ...[5] Bahá'u'lláh

The Day He revealeth Himself is Resurrection Day ....[6] The Báb

The Day of God's Revelation is the Day of the most great Resurrection.[7] Bahá'u'lláh

And this is the Resurrection in which God hath arisen in the Manifestation of His Own Self.[8] Bahá'u'lláh

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* "Him Whom God shall make manifest" is a title used by the Báb to refer to Bahá'u'lláh.

The mysteries of Resurrection and the events of the Last Hour are openly manifest, but the people are sunk in heedlessness and have suffered themselves to be wrapt in veils.[9] Bahá'u'lláh

"**Regret**" and "**torment**" have also been used in two ways:

Regret

"**Literal**" meaning	The soul's regretful state in the eternal world because of the denial of the Truth in this world
"**Allegorical**" meaning	The soul's "unconscious" regret in this world because of being deprived of the Truth

Torment

"**Literal**" meaning	God's punishment in the eternal world
"**Allegorical**" meaning	The spirit's "unconscious" torment for being deprived of the grace and mercy of God in this world

Why are the deniers of the Promised One of God in this world "unconscious" of torment and regret? This is a very important issue; inasmuch as the ignorance of the deniers of their hidden "torment and regret" has enabled them to remain in the sleep of negligence and comfort, giving them a sense of safety and self-satisfaction; such feelings of safety and satisfaction bring spiritual intoxication, and prevents them from recognizing the dangers that have taken over their whole being. More importantly, they are unaware that they do not know. This kind of ignorance is more common than other forms of ignorance, and its consequences are more dangerous. How great the number of people who consider themselves believers in the unity of God, and never realize that their only beloved is their evil passions and corrupt desires; their sole desire is a love of the world, and not of the one True God.

Say, by the righteousness of God! Soon they shall be put to proof in this trial; and those to whom it never occurred, to an extent even smaller than a speck of dust, that they did indeed worship other than God, shall be cast into the fire.[10] Bahá'u'lláh

It is for this reason that at the beginning of every Dispensation a vast multitude, who fondly imagine that their deeds are for God, become drowned and ungodly, and perceive this not ...[11] The Báb

On that Day thou wouldst regard thyself as the inmate of Paradise ... whereas in reality thou wouldst suffer thyself to be wrapt in veils and thy habitation would be the nethermost fire, though thou thyself wouldst not be cognizant thereof.[12] The Báb

Each of the following examples demonstrate, in a particular way, that being unaware of danger is not a guarantee that one is safe:

- Great are the number of people who consider themselves healthy and expect to live a long life, unaware that their whole body is being consumed by a deadly illness. When the time for a medical examination arrives, and they hear the result of their tests, they become astonished and full of fear, for the reality of their condition is contrary to what they imagined.
- Some people pay no attention to the rules for a healthy lifestyle; any advice, admonition, warning, or mention of reason or statistics means nothing to

them; their vain imaginations and false beliefs shield themselves from the dangers that are awaiting them.

- Many people are plagued with anxiety but are unaware of its cause; to discover and acknowledge the source of their problem is the first step toward its healing.

Similar rules and relationships also exist in the world of religion and faith. Many people are plagued by the pain of remoteness from God and the Promised One of the age. Some are aware of the pain and know that there is a problem, but are unaware of the cause of the disease. Another group of people knows of the existence of the disease and the cause of it, but with the help of imagination and thought conceals the danger from themselves. Yet another group have become so accustomed to the darkness of hopelessness and its victory and rule over their spirit that they consider living without "heavenly joy" is a necessity of living. It appears many people have never seen the beauty of the spring, nor have they heard the beautiful songs of the nightingale upon the branches.

Awakening those who are unaware and fast asleep is not an easy task. If people were aware that they were asleep it would be easier to awaken them. However, how would one who is asleep know that he is asleep? According to the verses of the Qur'án, the negligence and denial of God's Promised One for some people is so strong that they will not awaken until they experience the "torment" of the eternal world. Bahá'u'lláh states that the deniers of God's Religion will remain asleep until they depart from this world and experience the lower states of the next world, their true abode.[13]

The difficulty is this: If the All-Powerful God miraculously awakens negligent and sleeping people, and forces them to accept "the gift of faith", He will be removing their "gift of freedom and choice", which is the greatest sign and an essential condition of being human.

All believers are filled with hopes of attaining the highest Paradise, and they consider that joyous region to be their future eternal abode. However, by God's Decree, only those who have chosen the right path in this life will be admitted to that exhilarating realm and abide in that beautiful Garden. The gift of freedom and choice permits dwellers in this realm to ignore the consequences of their actions, i.e. the reward and punishment that awaits them. By God's Decree, only after a journey through this world will they become aware of this great mystery when they enter the next realm. Only in that "Hour" of entering the eternal world will the newly arrived see their eternal dwelling; only on that Day—the Day of Judgement—will the deniers of the Promised One of God learn of the greatness of the joys they missed in this world, and the loss of bounties and gift of the next world. It is a time when self-deceit ends; it is a day when they can no longer hide anything from themselves.

> Yea, (on that Day) whatsoever they had hidden before becometh manifest unto them. Qur'án 6:28

The mysteries and lessons of God's Wisdom are hidden and manifest in the world of creation; for the seed to grow and develop it must be hidden underground.

> *But to conceal the one from thee and to reveal the other is a mystery which none but the pure in heart can comprehend.*[14] Bahá'u'lláh

There is a similar plan in the evolution of a man. Only after birth from the world of the womb into this world are powers hidden in our being revealed; only after coming to this world do we understand what it means to see or to hear; only in this world do we comprehend the importance of eyes and ears. Life in this world is given to us as a time to prepare us of the eternal world. The veil of mystery of the next world is only revealed after the journey through this material life. Only on the next plane do we see and know ourselves as we really are—we will lose the power of self-deception and the skill of hiding our true "essence" from ourselves and from others. Only in that eternal realm will we discover the value of the powers we have developed in this world. Only in that world will we see the purity or impurity of our soul, and discover our spiritual station. Only after the journey from this home to the next will we learn the consequences of our acceptance or denial of God's Promised One.

Those who do not develop their spiritual capacities in this life will say upon reaching the eternal plane:

> O our Lord! [That which was hidden from us] we now see and hear. Return us to our former life that we may do good. We are now certain of Thy words. Qur'án 32:12

Bahá'u'lláh explains that great was the number of people who were busy worshipping God, directing others to obey religious laws, prohibiting them from what was unlawful, and mourning the tragedy of the martyrs of Karbilá.* However, when their Promised One, the Báb manifested Himself, they turned away from Him, and found no rest until they had made Him the target of hundreds of bullets; they then rejoiced over having done a great deed.[15] If all the people of the world banded together and gathered all the powers of thought, speech, reason, and proof in one man, they could not convince these tyrants that they were collaborators and inheritors of Shimr and Yazíd, the murderers of the martyrs of Karbilá.

Therefore, any lack of awareness by the deniers of the Promised One of God about the veil of "torment" that has covered their entire being is not a proof that they are not of the "tormented". This matter must be greatly emphasized and reflected upon; inasmuch as according to God's testimony, no matter what beliefs people hold, or whatever destiny they choose for themselves in this world, they are content with their choice. Reflect on the following verse as a world of meaning is hidden within it:

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* Ḥusayn ibn 'Alí (the third Imám) was murdered (AH 61/CE 680), along with most of his family and many companions, near Karbala, by the army of caliph Yazíd I. Shimr was one of the army commanders.

> Each sect delights in its own beliefs. Qur'án 23:53

Sa'dí, the well-known Persian poet, has a beautiful verse on this subject:

> If wisdom be wiped out of the expanse of the earth
> Still none would imagine himself ignorant

As we saw in the story of the Companions of the Cave (chapters 10 & 11), the dwellers in the Cave, i.e. Muslims, appear to be awake when their Promised One is manifested; but in reality they are fast asleep:

> Thou would have deemed them awake though they were really asleep. Qur'án 18:18

> *The Day of Resurrection hath, verily, come to pass, but the heedless are in a strange sleep.*[16] Bahá'u'lláh

There are many words related to "the Resurrection" that conceal the announcement of the appearance of the Messenger of our time. It is appropriate for us to consider a few more of these words. Since the literal meanings of these words are clear, we will only mention their allegorical meanings:

Allegorical meanings of words connected with the Resurrection

Heaven	To obtain the good-pleasure of God by accepting God's new Chosen One and obeying His Commandments
Hell	To subject oneself to the wrath of God by denying His new Chosen One; to be tormented by remoteness from God, the Source of joy
Blast in the Trumpet	Announcing the Call of God; bringing the Great Announcement to the people
The Gathering together (Ḥashr)	To awaken and instill hope and joy in people who are asleep, despondent and hopeless
The Gathering Place (Maḥshar)	Bringing together the scattered people under the banner of unity
To bring to Life (Nashr)	To breathe the spirit of faith into people, and give a new life to new believers
The Day the dead will rise (Yawm an-Nashr)	The time of awakening, awareness and joy; when people attain a new spiritual life
Coming forth from the Grave	To be freed from the darkness of negligence; to partake of the sun of the beauty and glory of the new Promised One of God
To stand before God	To stand before the Promised One Who appears in "the name of God"
To cross the Bridge	To pass beyond the state of denial into the world of faith and acknowledgement of the new Promised One of God; to pass the hell of hesitation, negligence and torment into the heaven of acceptance, assurance, knowledge and joy
The Balance	The judgement of people by the Promised One of the age
The Angels	The believers detached from the world who soar, with the wings of love and faith, in the atmosphere of eternal joy, prosperity and glory
The Day of Separation	The time of the separation of the believers from other people
The Day of Revelation	The Day of the Rising of the Promised One, and the time of

(Sending forth)	coming to life of the "spiritually dead"
That Day	The Day of the Manifestation of the Promised One
The Day of Religion	The Day that God bestows a new Religion to the world; the Day of recompense, the Day of Separation, the Day of Test

Although most people are unaware of this "Great Announcement", in this Hour a Resurrection is occurring in the world; the divine Trumpet is blasting, and the spiritually dead are rising and obtaining a new life. In this Resurrection the hearers of the "Summons" are free to accept the Call of God, rise up from the tomb of negligence and obtain a new life—or remain in the depths of negligence and the darkness of ignorance of the glory of God.

According to the divine Decree and Will, whoever hears the news of the appearance of the Messenger of God:

- Stands before God's Balance of justice.
- Accepts or denies the Promised One of the age.
- Based on that judgement, he receives his reward or punishment, and attains his eternal destiny: either in the heaven of faith, in the shadow of divine blessings and favor, or sets his face towards the hell of denial and remoteness from God.

The period of expectation has ended; the Day of God has come, and a great Resurrection is raised. It is the time of striving and search, not of waiting, rest and repose. Perhaps the following poem by Furúghí-i-Basṭámí is about the people of our time:

> How long shall we anticipate the Resurrection?
> Arise that we may begin a thousand resurrections.

We shall know God through His Words

> *Through His Revelation* [the Chosen One of God] *is the Day of Resurrection ushered in. In His Court of Justice the peoples of the world are brought to a reckoning, and each one shall receive the recompense of his deeds, he shall enter the heaven of God's good-pleasure, or else remain in the Fire of misbelief and denial.*[17] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Paradise signifieth first and foremost the good-pleasure of God.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Every soul that hath responded with the word "Yea",* hath traversed the Bridge.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Shake off your slumber, rouse yourselves from unconsciousness, incline your inner ears to the melody of the All-Sufficing; and conduct yourselves in a manner that beseemeth the Day of God Himself.*

> *Great is the station of him who hath in this Day perceived and become aware of the truth, and wretched is he who hath failed to comprehend the utterance of the Lord of wisdom, and to recognize the newly-arrived Friend in His new attire.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Bestow upon all created things that which God hath vouchsafed unto Thee through His bounty, that they may arise from the sepulchers of their bodies and be made*

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* "Yea" is the positive response to the Call of God. "Am I not your Lord?". They replied: "Yea, verily Thou art"! Qur'án 7:172

aware of the Cause that hath in truth appeared. Send down upon them, then, the fragrant and musk-laden breezes which God hath bestowed upon thee from time immemorial, that perchance it may cause the moldering bones to stir, and the people may not deprive themselves of the Spirit that was breathed into this ancient, this imperishable and eternal Pen. May they thereby be gathered in the utmost beauty, in the Presence of God, upon this pure and blessed land.[21] Bahá'u'lláh

O servant of God! ... Soar upon the wings of joy in the atmosphere of the love of God. Regard the people of the world as dead and seek the fellowship of the living. Whoso hath not breathed the sweet fragrance of the Beloved at this dawntide is indeed accounted among the dead.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

This brief span of mortal life may be viewed as less than a moment, and passeth swifter than lightening ....[23] Bahá'u'lláh

Fix not your eyes upon this world and all that is therein, for all shall pass away and be no more.[24] Bahá'u'lláh

Say! This handful of days have passed and continue to pass away. Strive, then, that perchance ye may attain unto that which shall lead to abiding prosperity in this world and in the next.[25] Bahá'u'lláh

THE Day of Resurrection is a day on which the sun riseth and setteth like unto any other day. How oft hath the Day of Resurrection dawned, and the people of the land where it occurred did not learn of the event.[26] The Báb

Consider the followers of Jesus who still ... expect His coming and who weep sore for His sake, night and day, even though He did come, and one thousand two hundred and seventy years have passed, and the Resurrection hath dawned. T And yet, they are still waiting.[27] The Báb

1 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, volume 8, p. 24.
2 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 144 (gr. 152)
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 143 (gr. 151)
4 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 107–108.
5 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 170 (gr. 182)
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 158.
7 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 62 (gr. 3.11)
8 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, volume 4, p. 291. (prov. tr.)
9 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 40–41.
10 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, volume 4, p. 263. (prov. tr.)
11 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 95.
12 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 83.
13 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 182.
14 The Hidden Words, p. 36 (no. 41)
15 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 300.
16 La'álíu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 83. (prov. tr.)
17 Qámús-i-Iqán, vol. 4, p. 1892. (prov. tr.)
18 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 62 (gr. 3.11)
19 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 13. (prov. tr.)
20 *Bahá'í World*, Vol. 18, p. 968.
21 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, pp. 295–296. (prov. tr.)
22 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (gr. 5.7)
23 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 396. (prov. tr.)

[24] Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 397. (prov. tr.)
[25] Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 371. (prov. tr.)
[26] *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 78.
[27] The Persian Bayán, p. 140. (prov. tr.)

20
Resurrection and the Hour in the Qur'án

A surprising number of Qur'anic verses can be found to connect "The Resurrection" and "The Hour" to the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith. We will review some of these verses in this chapter:

> *Appreciate the value of this Day .... This time and this moment that, in the Qur'án, hath been called the Hour, and referred to as the Resurrection, bestoweth life on creation.*[1]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Day of Resurrection was, through one proclamation, ushered in.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

If we reflect on the verses of the Qur'án we realize that it is illogical to think that "Resurrection" means the rising of the dead bodies from graves; besides, such an assumption is inconsistent with the methods and wisdom of our Creator. However, "the Resurrection" meaning "the Rising of spiritually dead from the grave of negligence and ignorance" is consistent not only with the divine methods and wisdom, but also with the Qur'anic verses and human reason and intelligence.

The following verses state that when "the Hour" strikes, people will rise from their "graves". However, some will, without any proof or reason, or without being aware of the truth of the matter, engage in disputation with God's Messenger:

> Verily, the Hour shall come; there can be no doubt in that; and God will raise those who are in graves. Yet, [on that Day] amongst mankind is he who disputes about [the Cause of] God, without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening Book.
> Qur'án 22:7–8

Question: Is it possible that after rising from their graves, the dead will begin to dispute with God? Would they dare to do such a thing? However, quarrels among the spiritually dead are a common occurrence. In every age, such behavior has been, and continues to be, the way of the narrow-minded people who see only the appearance of things and are ignorant of inner realities. Since they are ignorant of the divine power and majesty of the Messengers of God—hidden as it is beneath the veil of a human temple—they dare to oppose the Promised Ones and dispute with their followers.

Like other prophecies of the Qur'án, this prophecy has also been fulfilled. Many people, particularly Muslims and Christians, who have no true knowledge of the new Faith of God, have from the early days of the Faith been disputing with the Bahá'ís.

> *By God! This is the Advent of God .... It cannot be known by the names and words of the people of discord. Draw nigh unto it with radiant eyes .... Thus have ye been commanded ... by God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.*[3]
> Bahá'u'lláh

A tradition attributed to Imám Muḥammad Báqir confirms this truth:

> They will dispute concerning the Book brought to them by the Qá'im; many people will deny Him.[4]

The previously mentioned verses of Sura 22 al-Ḥajj subtly teach us that the believers in the new Faith of God enjoy a special privilege; they have attained the Source of divine knowledge and guidance, and are benefitting from it. This Source is the new heavenly Book that, according to verse 13:38 ("**For every age there is a Book**"), has been bestowed on the people of this age. Otherwise, what would be the Book which "**the people of discord**" do not have? Muslims and the believers in the new Faith all have access to the Qur'án. Then who are they who are deprived of an "**enlightening Book**" (Qur'án 22:8), i.e. a book that clarifies matters? Clearly, the deniers of that new Book deprive themselves of its knowledge. They are the ones who have no true knowledge of the new Resurrection, having veiled themselves from the dawn of the Sun of God's guidance for this age.

> *There is no good thing that is not recorded in this unerring Book.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

Therefore, "he who disputes" is deprived of access to:

- The Source of new knowledge.
- New guidance.
- An enlightening Book that would offer new clarifications.

It is greatly surprising that "**the people of discord**" —despite being so remote from truth, and trapped in prejudices and vain imaginings—will, regardless of their ignorance and impotence, rise up against God and write books to refute His "unerring Book"!

In the following verse God teaches us that "**the Hour**" will come, but the people will not understand:

> Do they expect other than this: that the Hour shall come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware? Qur'án 43:66

"The Hour" is the time of the fulfillment of the promise of Resurrection. How is it possible for the dead to rise up from their tombs at the Hour of Resurrection, while people remain unaware of the event? Such a literal Resurrection would turn the world upside down—the rising of the dead in thousands of cities and villages all around the world would be such an astonishing and dreadful event as to eclipse anything that has ever previously occurred.

Let us also weigh the possibility of a bodily resurrection with the balance of reason. If we consider the number of deaths from the beginning of creation until now to be a hundred times the number of the living; with their rising from graves the world's population will increase by 100 times its current size. For example, a "city" of 12 million will suddenly have 1212 million people! Will the earth have the capacity to accommodate such an increase? We should not forget that many building and roads of today could have been cemeteries in the past; many of the dead must rise from among buildings and streets of today. How great the number of eyes, hearts and bones that belong to multiple owners

who must compete with each other for those body parts! Besides, atoms of dead bodies would have been dispersed throughout nature, including being incorporated in living plants, animals and people. This presents us with an impossible scenario.

A lack of awareness of the occurrence of the Resurrection is possible only if that event occurs in a spiritual sense. This "allegorical" prophecy of the Qur'án, similar to other prophecies of that Book, has been fulfilled with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith; inasmuch as this Faith has begun a spiritual Resurrection in the lives of millions of people in the world. Nevertheless, most inhabitants of the earth are unaware of this great event; they do not know that in these days, instead of one, two great Resurrections have occurred, one with the appearance of the Báb, and the another with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

> Yet not one recognized Him, though He recognized every one of them[6] The Báb

> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night .... 2 Peter 3:10

> I know your deeds, you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die. I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it and repent. But if you do not wake up I will come like a thief .... Revelation 3:1–3

> We have verily made the world anew through the breezes of Revelation, and have manifested the divine Springtime; but most of the people comprehend not.[7] Bahá'u'lláh

> Most of the people, even as children, have busied themselves with the mire of nebulous fancies; they are heedless of the Light of these Days.[8] Bahá'u'lláh

Many verses of the Qur'án contradict a literal interpretation of Resurrection, i.e. the rise of the decayed bones and scattered atoms in ancient cemeteries around the world, and their conversion into humans.

> And warn them of the Day of Regret, when the Decree [*Amr*] hath been fulfilled, but they are heedless and they disbelieve [in the Promised One]. Qur'án 19:39

Many mysteries of the Great Puzzle of the Qur'án are hidden in the above verse:

- *Warn them.* Why should there be any warning? Warning is necessary when referring to an important event about which many people are unaware, having missed its occurrence.
- *The Day of Regret.* Why should there be any regrets? Because the event has occurred, but many people are negligent and disregard their responsibilities.

It is clear that if we do not accept the Promised One of the age due to our negligence, then our spirit will be full of regret and deprivation in both worlds. This remorse may not be clear to us in this world; but our spiritual anguish will become apparent once the veil of mystery is removed, and we clearly see our spirit as it is in the next world.

Soon they will readily perceive what they now deny.[9] Bahá'u'lláh

- *The Decree [Amr] hath been fulfilled.* The words "fulfilled" and "Decree" (Amr) have both been used in reference to the appearance of "the Great Announcement" and "the Remembrance of God" (Dhikr). Note the following examples from the Qur'án and from the Writings of the Báb:

Wait (be patient) until God's Decree (Religion) hath appeared. Qur'án 9:24

Yea, that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained.[10] The Báb

The decree of God will come to pass (in time); seek not to hasten it. Qur'án 16:1

Verily His decree hath been issued, and the command of God, as given in the Mother Book, hath indeed been revealed ....[11] The Báb

- *But they (the people) are heedless.* If the Resurrection were to be literal and the dead were to rise out of their graves, then heedlessness and negligence would be meaningless; in such a case, the people would be seized with such a great fear that cannot be described. Heedlessness or lack of awareness is possible only if the glory and majesty of God was hidden in a humble human temple.
- *And they* [the people] *disbelieve.*

Observe how clearly our compassionate Creator has provided us with the key to the Great puzzle of the Qur'án through two words of this verse: "they disbelieve". Why do people fail to believe? The reason is that there was no physical Resurrection! It is a spiritual Resurrection! This has now occurred together with "**the Great Announcement**". However, people have been so busy with worldly affairs, and trapped in age-old prejudices and vain imaginings that they have remained unaware of that spiritual "Resurrection" and the "Great Announcement". They will continually regret their torpor and failure to awaken from their bed of negligence.

God in His wisdom has decreed that until they awaken, they will not be aware of their regret, nor will they be aware of the Promised One's pity for them. Suppose God raised the dead out of their graves and bestowed a new life in them. Could the risen dead fail to see such a display of power and majesty by the Creator of the universe? Could they refuse to express their servitude to God? Could they refuse to accept, with heart and soul, the crown of eternal life and the gift of faith—the greatest gift of God to humanity? How could a refusal to believe be associated with a physical Resurrection?

When the Day came to pass , and the Hour struck -- when the Decree was fulfilled, and the light of Beauty established in its noontide glory -- all maliciously rose up against Him Whose light embraceth all created things. They were all then wrapt in the densest veils of unbelief.[12] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verses demonstrate that despite the fulfilment of God's Promise, the veils of idle fancy will continue to cover the Muslims' power of perception, and vain imaginings will overcome their spirit, so much so that the majority will be incapable of seeing the power and grandeur of the Promised

One. Their negligence will be so great that a large number of them, instead of expressing servitude before the magnificence and grandeur of God's Chosen One, will rise up in opposition to Him and strive to prevent the spread of His Faith. However, all their attempts will fail.

> They say: "When will this promise be fulfilled, if ye are truthful? .... Nay, it will come upon them of a sudden, will confound them, and they will be unable to repel it, nor will they be given a respite. Qur'án 21:38, 40

Observe how our gracious God clearly instructs us that the people will be incapable of preventing the fulfillment of the "promise".

If this "promise" is related to the next world, would it be possible for the people to rise up and try to prevent the fulfillment of the purpose of God? Could dead bodies risen from the dust be so emboldened? Only the spiritually dead, who have buried their spirits in the darkness of prejudice, ignorance and negligence, dare to be so presumptuous. In every age, such people have striven to extinguish the light of God. In the Age of Ignorance, such people engaged in wars against the Prophet of Islám. They vainly imagined that they could prevent the Messenger of God from fulfilling the Will of God. Such tragic stories have been repeated with the appearance of every Messenger since the beginning of creation until now. Our age is no exception.

The last sentence of 21:40 clearly confirms the opposition of unbelievers (i.e. "the spiritually dead") to the Call of the new Promised One of God; inasmuch as it states they will not be given a respite.

Consider also the following verses:

> When it [the Event] cometh to pass, will ye then believe in it? [After the fulfillment of the promise of God, will people believe in it?] .... They ask thee [Muḥammad] to inform [confirm]: "Is He [the Promised One] true?" Say: "Yea, by my Lord, verily He is true; and ye cannot prevent Him [frustrate His purpose]". ... Is not God's Promise true? [indeed it is true] but most of them [the people] do not know. Qur'án 10:51, 53, 55

The above verses teach us the following truths:

- The fulfillment of a promised "Event" is in God's Hands. (*When the Event cometh to pass*).
- Acceptance of the Promise and belief in "the Event" is the responsibility of the people.(... *will ye then believe in it?*).
- The people express doubt regarding the Promised One Who is the Messenger of God and the Executer of His Promise. (*They ask ... "Is He true"?*)
- Muḥammad is told by God to emphatically state that the promise is true in an attempt to reassure the people. (*Say: Yea, by My Lord, verily He is true*)
- Some people deny the promise, but its fulfillment is inevitable. (... *ye cannot frustrate His purpose*).
- At the end of the passage, God once again emphasizes the truth of the Promise . (*No doubt indeed, God's Promise is true*)

- Finally, God informs us that most people do not understand the meaning of this "Promise", and will remain unaware of its fulfillment. (... *but most of the people do not know.*)

If there were no other verses in the Qur'án to bring to light the Great Puzzle out of the plane of mystery, these few words would have been sufficient. These verses clearly demonstrate that people do not lose their God-given free will when they are faced with "the Event"—they could witness "the Event" and still deny its truth; Their freedom to choose is so unhindered that some of them strive to restrain the Promised One.

One of the great mysteries of the Qur'án is the use of the pronoun Hawa [He] in cases where there is a discussion of the Event or the Promise, and not the appearance of a particular Person. The use of the word "He" in the verse shows that the fulfillment of "the Promise" is related to the coming of "the Promised One"; otherwise why would there be a question of the truth of "Him"? (*Is He true? Indeed, He is true).*

Many people seek safety in following the majority. However, the above verses dispute such a fancy, inasmuch as they declare: *Most of the people do not know.*

Verse 10:60 states:

> Those who slander God, on the Day of Resurrection, what do they imagine? Verily God is the Source of bounty to the people, but most of them are not grateful.
> Qur'án 10:60

How can a person slander God? They only way to do this is to consider His Messenger an imposter; if we consider His Messenger an imposter, it is as though we have considered God an imposter.

Then it is stated:

> Know of a certainly that the friends of God have no fear, nor do they grieve; they are those who believe [in the new Faith] and are God-fearing; for them there are glad-tidings for life in this world and in the next. The Words of God are unchanging. That [the recognition of the new Religion of God] is the cause of salvation.
> Qur'án 10:62–64

The above verses speak of belief and denial. Belief in what or whom? The "promise" and the Promised One mentioned in verse 10:53.

> Is He true? (Is He from God?) Yea, by My Lord! Verily He is true.
> Qur'án 10:53

Verse 10:62 mentions "the friends of God". To whom does this expression refer? In many of His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh refers to His followers as "the friends of God":

> *O my God, O my God! Praise be unto Thee that Thou hast unlocked before the faces of Thy loved ones the portals of Thy knowledge and wisdom, and hast guided them to Thy Path. Thou hast illumined their hearts with the light of Thy knowledge, and*

made known unto them that which will draw them nigh unto Thy Holy Court.[13]
Bahá'u'lláh

O friends of God! ... Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character .... We fain hope that ye act with amity, love and friendship towards one another, in such wise that through your unity the banner of Oneness be upraised and the standard of misbelief destroyed.[14]
Bahá'u'lláh

The friends of God must look upon the creatures with the eye of kindness, and through loving counsels and pure and goodly deeds draw them all to the Horizon of guidance.[15]
Bahá'u'lláh

O friends of God! Incline your inner ears to the voice of the peerless and self-subsisting Lord, that He may deliver you from the bonds of entanglement and the depths of darkness and enable you to attain the eternal light.[16]
Bahá'u'lláh

Woe unto the deniers on that Day, those who deny the Day of Religion [the Day of Judgement], which none will deny save every sinful transgressor. When Our verses are recited to him, he says: "[These are] tales of the ancients"! Nay, surely [their denial is because] their hearts are stained with that which their hands have wrought Nay, surely on that Day they are deprived of [the Presence of] their Lord; and furthermore, they will surely burn in the Hellfire. Then it will be said to them: "This is what you used to deny".... Verily, Paradise is the abode of the righteous [those who did not deny the Truth]. Qur'án 83:10–17, 22

All the above verses have been fulfilled with the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith:

Woe unto the deniers on that Day, those who deny the Day of Religion. Qur'án 83:10–11

The Bahá'ís say that "the Day of one-thousand-years" of the former religion has ended"; a new "Day of Religion" has begun. However, Muslims claim that the title "the Seal of the Prophets" means "The Day of Religion" has ended with the appearance of Islám, and that it will never be renewed. It is in reference to such claims that another verse is revealed:

So, woe unto those who disbelieve in wiitnessing a Great Day. Qur'án 19:37

Also, the following verse prophecies that, in this blessed Day, God will honor us with the revelation of a new Religion:

On that Day God will bestow upon them their True Religion. Qur'án 24:25

Why have those who deny "the day of Religion" been called "liars"? The reason is that the verses of the Qur'án, from the beginning to the end, bear witness to the coming of a new Religion from God. How is it possible for someone to accept the Qur'án and reject the testimony of that Book, because he considers it is contrary to his fanciful desires and idle imaginings? These are the ones to whom verse 83:13 refers:

When Our verses are recited to him, he says: : "Tales of the ancients"!
Qur'án 83:13

> *In the coming Revelation* [the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh], *the sincere shall be distinguished from the insincere by their response to the Call of God* [recognition of the Promised One].[17] The Báb

The arising of the dead from the cemeteries worldwide would be such a terrifying event that it would obliterate any possibility of denial. The denial of God's verses, or considering them to be fables, is only possible by "the spiritually dead".

The following verse also confirms the people's denial:

> The Day when the Summoner shall summon to a stern business. Qur'án 54:6

The following verse states that on the Day of "Reckoning" people will mock the Words of the Messenger of God:

> The time of Reckoning for the people is drawing nigh, but they are heedless and turn away. Now cometh to them a new Reminder [*Dhikr*] from their Lord, but they hear Him and mock. Qur'án 21:1–2

Again, we must ask ourselves" that if "the Reckoning" was accompanied by the rising of the dead from their graves, would the people dare or have the power to mock the Promised One? Such an extreme event would induce great fear in people concerning their eternal fate. How could there be heedlessness or ridicule under such conditions?

Dhikr ("Remembrance, Reminder") is also consistent with the appearance of the Báb; inasmuch as He is the new "Remembrance" from God:

> *O people of the earth! Whoso obeyeth the Remembrance of God and His Book hath in truth obeyed God ....*[18] The Báb

As we saw before, the Qur'án repeatedly uses the phrase "the Presence of God" to refer to the Promised One of our time. The following verse mentions three things:

- The Promise of meeting God
- People will deny the Promise
- The coming of "the Hour" or the time of the fulfillment of the Promise

> Lost indeed are they that deny the Promise of meeting God, until the Hour (of Revelation) comes upon them of a sudden. Qur'án 6:31

It is clear that the Promise of "meeting God" and the coming of "the Hour" are interrelated, and denying one implies the denial of the other.

The two Promised Ones of our era have repeatedly testified that "the Hour" has come, "the Resurrection" has been established and the angels are weighing the people's deeds in the divine Balance.

> *The appointed Hour hath struck, and the Bugle hath sounded, and the Balance calleth aloud, saying: "I am the Discerner, the All-Knowing. I disclose and manifest the doings of the nations before the face of creation; I am the Witness, All-Informed. Not a single atom remaineth but that I have manifested it; I am the Equitable, the Undeviating; The hand of Justice hath established Me upon the Seat of creation in the Days of God, the Lord of all worlds.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

And the One Who hath appeared is, verily, the Manifestation of the Day of Resurrection and the Revealer of the appointed Hour .... Through Him the horizon of the world is illumined and the Most Great Name manifested.[20] Bahá'u'lláh

This Day is the day of Judgement and the day of bounty.[21] Bahá'u'lláh

An important term used in the Qur'án in reference to our era is "**the Day of Religion**". This has been used in both literal and allegorical senses:

Literal	The Day when God bestows on humanity a new Religion
Allegorical	The Day of Judgement or the Day of Resurrection

The following verses use both meanings:

That which ye have been promised is true. The promise of the coming of the Religion shall be fulfilled .... Ye have disagreements over this .... They ask: "When shall the Day of Religion be?" It is a day when they shall be tested by the Fire. Taste ye, then your torment; this is that which ye used to ask to be hastened. Verily the righteous shall be in a Paradise with Springs. Qur'án 51:5–25

The above verses:

- Announce the coming of a new Religion (literal meaning)
- The verses inform us that the believers have different opinions regarding the matter. This prophecy has been fulfilled. Most Muslims do not believe in the renewal of Religion.
- Verse 51:12 mentions "the day of Religion". That day has been decribed in two different ways:

  a) It is a difficult day when the people are tested. (51:13)
  b) It is a day the people were trying to hasten. (51:14)

These two signs have been used many times in the Qur'án regarding the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith, which we studied in previous chapters. Bodily Resurrection is not compatible with a test. Tests are only valid if people have the freedom to choose their destiny. The time of the rising of the Promised One is the Day when the people are faced with tests that will determine their purity and merit, or their impurity and lack of worth. On that Day people will be faced with a difficult and important decision: whether to join the new Faith.

There is a tradition that confirms the meaning of "the Day of Religion" as explained in this book. Imám Muḥammad Báqir was asked for the meaning of the following verse:

We denied the Day of Religion until we reached certainty. Qur'án 74:46–47

He responded: "*The Days of the Qá'im*",[22] meaning this verse is related to **the time of the Qá'im, i.e. "the Day of Religion"**, is the same as the Day of the appearance of the Promised One.

A few other verses clearly prophecy the appearance of the Promised One or "the Day of Religion":

I swear by the Lord of heavens and earth! Verily He is indeed true. Just as ye [hear yourselves] speak [ye will hear Him]. [Even as you do not doubt yourselves speaking, do not doubt Him]. Qur'án 51:23

The following verses also speak of "the Day of Religion":

Those who believe in "**the Day of Religion**" .... It is the promised Day. Qur'án 70:26, 44

They say: "Woe unto us! This is "**the Day of Religion**"; this is the Day of Separation, the Day ye used to deny. Qur'án 37:20–21

The above verses tell us the following:

- A group of people will believe in the Day of Religion; another group will consider it untrue. What Day do Muslims consider untrue? They believe in a bodily Resurrection. Many of them deny the spiritual Resurrection that resulted with the appearance of the Báb.
- The appearance of the Promised One will test and divide people: the believers on one side, the deniers on the other. It is **the Day of Severing, the Day of Separation**.

The Lord, the Most Exalted, the Most High, hath established for Himself a Balance, a Touchstone, that thereby the one who hath attained the knowledge of God may be distinguished from the one deprived of such knowledge. The Day when the Divine Touchstone appeareth is referred to as "the Day of Severing", inasmuch as on that Day, the truthful is separated from the imposter, and the lover from the malicious.[23] Bahá'u'lláh

As with "the Day of Religion", the term "the Day of Severance", referring to the separation of people on the Day of the Promised One, has also been used in verses of the Qur'án. For example, there are the following verses in Sura 78 an-Naba' ("The Tidings, the Announcement"):

Verily the Day of Severing has a fixed time. Qur'án 78:17

The Day when there is a blast in the Trumpet. Qur'án 78:18

They considered Our verses untrue. Qur'án 78:28

The Day when the Spirit will rise accompanied by angels. Qur'án 78:38

That Day is true; then whoever desires let him seek a path of return to his Lord. Qur'án 78:39

The above verses contain the following points:

- There is a blast on the Trumpet on the promised Day. "The Trumpet blast" is a term used a number of times in the Qur'án to refer to the appearance of the Promised One. This will be discussed in chapter 22.
- These verses speak of denial. As has been repeatedly mentioned, Muslims do not deny a physical (literal) Resurrection. The denial relates to the Resurrection occurring with the appearance of the Qá'im.
- The appearance of "the Spirit" and the angels refers to the return of Christ, i.e. "the Spirit of God". The tidings of the coming of "the Spirit" accompanied

by angels has been promised to the Christians in the Bible in exactly the same way.

- On that Day, people will have free will to accept the Call of the Promised One, or to ignore it.

The following verse refers to both "the Day of Severing" and "the Day of Gathering":

> The Day of Severing hath been fixed for them; (on that Day) they will gather together. Qur'án 44:40

As we saw before, "the Day of Religion" is the same as "the Day of Severing"; the following verse also mentions this:

> They say: "Woe unto us! This is the Day of Religion; this is the Day of Severing, the Day we used to deny. Qur'án 37:20–21

The promised Day is "the Day of Severing" and "the Day of Gathering". The people are divided into two groups: the believers and the deniers; each person joins one of the groups.

> *This is the Day of Great Severing, and the Day of Gathering.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The Day of Judgement ... is the Day of Severing. The Day of Recompense is a day upon which the diverse peoples and kindreds will be gathered together, and will set their faces towards one Wellspring.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

> The Day of Gathering about which there is no doubt: Some will be in Paradise; others will be in the Hellfire. Qur'án 42:7

As we mentioned before, many Qur'anic verses concerning the Resurrection have both literal and allegorical meanings. The above verse is of this kind; both in this world and in the next, people will join the group that they chose. In both worlds, according to the Plan of God, the deniers are in Hell-fire and the believers are in Paradise.

The Day of Regret

Another title of the Day of the appearance of the Promised One is the Day of Regret:

> And warn them concerning the Day of Regret, when the Decree of God hath been fulfilled, but they [the people] are heedless and disbelieve [in the Promised One]. Qur'án 19:39

The above verse provides us with several signs:

- The ***Amr*** ("the Cause, the Decree") is fulfilled. As previously mentioned, *Amr* is one of the most important words in the Qur'án regarding the appearance of the Promised One.
- People are unaware of the arrival of "**the Day of Regret**". The lack of awareness is possible only if there is a spiritual Resurrection, not a physical (bodily) one.
- People refuse to believe. This clearly indicates that the matter of belief or denial is a test for people. After the fulfillment of the Decree, how is it

possible for people not to believe? With a physical Resurrection there cannot be a discussion of belief. However, a spiritual Resurrection will be a test where people will reap the consequences of their belief or unbelief.

The Day of Torment

Both the Bible and the Qur'án contain references to the torment of the promised Day. The following verse refers to the impatience of people wanting to hasten the Day of Torment, yet being caught unaware by it when it finally arrives:

> They desire to hasten "**the Torment**". Had it not been an appointed time, it would have overtaken them now; it will come to them of a sudden, and they will not be aware [of its occurrence]. Qur'án 29:53

The promised Day is a day of torment and judgement, it is a day of mercy and bounty, a day of reward and punishment.

> *This Day is a day of Judgement and a day of bounty.*[26] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This Day is the day of reward and punishment.*[27] Bahá'u'lláh

> *For one thousand three hundred years they called on the name of the True One. And then, with the swords of malice, they caused Him to suffer martyrdom. This was the retribution on the Day of Judgement.*[28] Bahá'u'lláh

Consequences of a physical Resurrection

A physical Resurrection, meaning the rising of dead bodies from their graves—is not consistent with the way of God. The divine Scriptures make it clear that if God desired, He could, in an instance, transform the unbelievers into believers:

> Do ye not know that God hath, in truth, created the heavens and the earth? Should He desire, He will remove you (the people), and bring forth a new creation; this is not a difficult thing for God to do. Qur'án 14:19–20

The above verse reiterates that God's creation is perfect. If God desired, in His knowledge and wisdom, He could destroy the world and create a new one. However, this would not be compatible with the plan of creation, inasmuch as it would be a sign of the imperfection of that plan. God's method is explained in the following:

> If God desired, He would guide the whole of humanity [to the straight path]. Qur'án 13:31

The above verse emphasizes God's power to do as He pleases. However, it is clear that removing people's freedom of choice is not compatible with the Will of God.

Why did Muḥammad, despite the support of God's divine power and protection, endure suffering and misfortune? He could have forced the pure-in-heart to believe in Him and destroyed the hypocrites and His enemies. Yet, this would have been contrary to the divine plan and wisdom as has also been repeatedly confirmed in the Bahá'í Scriptures:

Think not that God is powerless. I swear by the Most Great Name! Should it be His purpose, He would, with one word, seize the souls of all men.[29] Bahá'u'lláh

God's Way has always been and will continue to be to bestow freedom on His servants that their true nature and inner purpose be disclosed. Fear and compulsion would prevent this, and would negate the gift of being human. When our spirit arises through the power of love, and is imbued with the Spirit of God, then our faith is worthy of our Creator. Compulsion has no place in the Court of God. Bahá'u'lláh informs us in a Tablet that He is aware of what is hidden in our hearts, and He is capable of conquering the world with one word. However, that would force all people, whether willing or not, to surrender to the Cause of God and accept the "gift" of faith. There is no value in such a submission.[30]

SHOULD it be Our wish, it is in Our power to compel, through the agency of but one letter of Our Revelation, the world and all that is therein to recognize, in less than the twinkling of an eye, the truth of Our Cause ....[31] The Báb

To attain faith and salvation in both worlds one must strive and seek, through prayer and supplication to the Court of the Omnipotent and Compassionate God. The Messengers of God never compel us to believe; their responsibility is to explain and show us the straight path. Our duty is to desire and seek with a pure heart, and to attain the gift of faith:

There is no compulsion in Religion. There is clear distinction between truth and error. Whosoever rejects the Evil One and believes in God hath, in truth, clung to the Sure Handle that will not be broken. Qur'án 2:256

Our duty is only to clearly proclaim the Message. Qur'án 36:17

Thy duty is to proclaim (the Message), and Ours is to call them to account. Qur'án 13:40

Our just God has always hidden His Beauty and glory from the ungrateful. Only those who purify their spirit, pray and supplicate, and beg for the gift of faith are admitted into His Court of mercy and bounty; only those who ardently desire the Beloved may approach His matchless Presence. The lovers of veils, who are estranged from Truth and the gift of faith, will never partake of the radiant Sun.

We shall know God through His Words

Wherefore, O my friend, it behooveth Us to exert the highest endeavour ... so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favour of that grace.[32] Bahá'u'lláh

This Book .... Is guidance for the God-fearing. Qur'án 2:2

The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way. Psalm 25:9

When God arose to judgement, to save all the meek of the earth. Psalm 76:9

Whosoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.
Revelation 22:17

The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future![33]
The Báb

Say: O people! Verily, the Truth hath come to you from your Lord. Whosoever receiveth guidance, will do so for his own soul, and whoever is misled, it is to his loss.
Qur'án 10:108

By God! If ye do well, to your own behoof will ye do well; and if ye deny God and His signs, We, in very truth, having God, can well dispense with all creatures and all earthly dominion.[34]
The Báb

Say: This is the Truth from your Lord. Whoever desireth let him believe, and whoever desireth let him turn away.
Qur'án 18:29

By God! We desire naught for you save that which draw you nigh unto Him, and cause you to enter the Kingdom of eternity. Verily, He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.[35]
Bahá'u'lláh

1 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 166. (prov. tr.)
2 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 2,p. 9. (prov. tr.)
3 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 255. (prov. tr.)
4 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, Al-Jámi'at Lidurur Al'a'imat al-Aṭhár, vol. 24, p. 313.
5 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4 p. 324. (prov. tr.)
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 90.
7 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 108. (prov. tr.)
8 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 149. (prov. tr.)
9 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání i, vol. 8, p. 16. (prov. tr.)
10 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
11 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 56.
12 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4 p. 296. (prov. tr.)
13 Majmú'iy-i--Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, p. 161. (prov. tr.)
14 Partly from Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, pp. 229–232 (prov. tr.), and partly from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 316 (no. CXLVII).
15 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 305. (prov. tr.)
16 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 71 (gr. 5.1)
17 The Persian Bayán, p. 237. (prov. tr.)
18 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 43.
19 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, pp. 142–143. (prov. tr.)
20 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 261. (prov. tr.)
21 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 328. (prov. tr.)
22 Reference not given.
23 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 119. (prov. tr.)
24 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 25. (prov. tr.)
25 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 3, p. 250. (prov. tr.)
26 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 328. (prov. tr.)
27 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 345. (prov. tr.)
28 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 279. (prov. tr.)
29 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 289. (prov. tr.)
30 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 10.
31 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 68.

32 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 199.
33 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 77.
34 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 42.
35 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 188. (prov. tr.)

Part 9
The language of mystery

This part includes two chapters:

21. The hidden plan
22. Perspicuous and allegorical verses

If any soul cling to the literal meaning of the afore-mentioned, outward conditions, he shall never attain the light of faith.[1]
Bahá'u'lláh

Indeed the Hour shall come; I have kept it hidden to reward each soul according to his efforts.
Qur'án 20:15

Indeed it is verily a noble Qur'án in a concealed [well-guarded] Book; none shall touch it save the pure in heart; [it is] a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds.
Qur'án 56:77–80

1 Muḥáḍirát, vol. 1–2, p. 984. (prov. tr.)

21
The concealed plan

This chapter clarifies one of the principles of God's relationship to humanity. It responds to the question: "Why are the signs of the appearance of the Messengers of God concealed in the shell of mystery and allusions?"

> *Consider the Scriptures of former religions. The announcement regarding the advent of every subsequent Prophet of God hath depended upon the utterances of the former Prophet, and they all have spoken in veiled and symbolic language.*[1]
> Bahá'u'lláh

A study of the Qur'án demonstrates that God conceals the signs of the appearance of the Promised One of the age, with utmost skill and beauty, within many and varied veils and vestures. One of these veils is "the Hour" or "the Resurrection". The concealment is to such a degree that even if we study the divine verses many times, we may fail to see the pearls of meaning and mystery hidden in the shell of words. However, having access to "the key of mystery" bestowed by the Promised One, the veil of mystery is suddenly removed from our eyes, and we can clearly see that there are two "Resurrections" and two "Judgements"; one the result of the arrival of the Promised One and having to face the Balance of His "Judgement" in this world; another occurs when we stand before the Balance of His "Judgement" is the next world. The existence of these two "Resurrections" and these two "Judgements" become so clear once we are supplied with the key to the mystery that we ask ourselves, with great amazement: Look how clear are the signs and prophecies of the Qur'án. Why, during all the past centuries, have all the scholars and religious leaders failed to discover and understand them?

Consider the human eye. It has developed to correctly see every shape. Nevertheless, it is sometimes fooled. Adjacent are a negative and a positive version of the same image, combining two sketches, one being of an old womana and the other of a young woman. Most people can only see the young woman. However, in the negative image on the left, one might more clearly see the larger profile of an old woman

Old woman or young woman?

The secret of the concealment of the "Resurrection" in this world within the "Resurrection" in the eternal world is the amazing similarity between the two. The Designer of the world has so skillfully blended the two "Events" that we cannot see them separately, unless we pay close attention to the details. With

some thought and reflection we realize that two different "Events" or two different Resurrections are at work; one in this world, and another in the next. Whatever occurs in one, also happens in the other—it is as though the two events are the mirror images of each other. Their similarity is so great that sometimes it is impossible to separate them. Some of the divine verses are related to and describe the Resurrections in both worlds.

The use of terminology related to the eternal life to conceal the "Great Announcement" of our time is one the most beautiful artworks of the Qur'án and other Scriptures. A mystery of this incomparable Artwork, this exquisite Design, is that the signs are hidden and manifest at the same time. It is as though the sun is shining and darkened simultaneously. Only the Designer of the universe is capable of contriving such a combination. Its beauty is mysterious and perfect, and a clear sign of the power and wisdom of the Creator of the universe.

This radiant and concealed Light is created in such a way that even after the Promised One of the age removes the veil, and reveals its glory and beauty, its radiant and mystic splendor is visible only to the purehearted. Can a greater miracle than this be imagined?

The Most Manifest of the Manifest and the Most Hidden of the Hidden*

Suppose you wanted to pass some news secretly to a faraway friend, the general disclosure of which could be dangerous. How would you achieve your purpose? You may tell yourself: "I will use special words and sentences that only my friend understands, while others will assume I am saying something else." If you are careful about it, this is not hard to accomplish. Now suppose you have a piece of news that you must write, repeatedly, in a book, and you know that, during the course of a thousand years or more, millions of people will repeatedly and carefully read the book. Imagine how difficult it would be to conceal that news for such a long time, and from so many curious and intelligent people!

Was the Plan of God fulfilled? Was the news of the coming of our Promised One—repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'án—concealed from so many curious and intelligent people, until the time of the manifestation? Examining the ideas and thoughts of the scholars and great thinkers of Islám demonstrates that they were not truly aware of this hidden announcement. A full awareness was only possible after the arrival of the Promised One of our time when He, the Promised One suddenly lifted the veil of mystery from the prophecy. It is strange that many people are still incapable of seeing this great miracle.

What kind of Sun is it that is radiant and concealed at the same time? What kind of miracle is it that some people sacrifice their lives for the honor of seeing it and professing its truth, while others are so overcome by fear, perceiving this

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* Bahá'u'lláh's description of God.

great miracle as such a danger to their safety, that they murder those who witness the Light of that radiant Sun?

> *Gracious God! One Call induceth both drunkenness and awakening, both oblivion and the knowledge of all things.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Why does God use an allegorical language to tell us about the Promised One of our time? Many mysteries and much wisdom are hidden in this. One of the greatest gifts God has bestowed on us is the gift of freedom of choice. Our being, our spirit, is created with this unique gem; and our human identity depends on it.

> *Exalted be He! It would assuredly be unjust, if God were to prevent His servants from committing a deed, and compel them to do another ....*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

God will never force the lovers of darkness into the sunlight. There has never been and will never be any change in God's method.

> *By My life! Were I to burn away the veil of this Station, the souls of all men would soar unto the Court of thy Lord ....*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Were He to fully make Himself known to His servants, they would assuredly rid themselves of all things, and would abide within the precincts of His court; in such wise that the kings of the earth would be found priding themselves on being His subjects.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

To protect and preserve the gift of freedom, our Most Wise and All-Knowing Creator conceals the signs of the Promised One in "allegorical" language, so that those who are thirsty for the water of life will attain the fountain of inner mysteries, and the lovers of the light of knowledge may attain the Sun of knowledge. However, the lovers of veils, who are overcome with fear and flee from the Sun, are deprived of its radiance.

By spreading a beautiful and delicate curtain of allegorical language over the spiritual words, the divine Designer enigmatically conceals the light of the signs of the coming of His Chosen One from the eyes of selfish and hypocritical people. The compassionate and omniscient God never forcibly awakens those who are deeply asleep; or compels the spiritually blind to see the face of the Beloved:

> If Thy Lord had willed, all that dwell on earth surely would believe. Then wilt Thou compel the people to become believers? Qur'án 10:99

> This indeed is a reminder; then let whoever desireth choose the path to his Lord. Qur'án 73:19

> There is no compulsion in Religion. Qur'án 2:256

Like the face of an adorned bride, the mystery of the Word of God is hidden beneath a delicate veil. The new Promised One removes the veil of mystery and discloses that Beauty to the seekers and lovers of the Face of the Beloved:

> *The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence*

established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal.[6]
Bahá'u'lláh

If the coming of the "Hour" were accompanied by physical power and dominion, or if the signs and proofs were given clearly, in a "perspicuous" language, all people, out of fear and compulsion and in hope of eternal glory and bounty, willingly or unwillingly would submit to the will of God, and would profess belief. In that case, human will, freedom, search and effort, would all lose their value. Then every ungrateful and worldly, or selfish and ignorant individual, would without any effort attain the shining crown of faith—a crown the attainment of which is man's highest honor.

One of the most important ways that the believer is tested is through verses that are revealed in allegorical language, Such verses have, during ages and centuries, separated the true believer from those who are superficial or hypocritical. In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh divides the Words of God into two different categories:

One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion.[7]

The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed.[8]

Why, according to the promise of the Qur'án, do only "those who strive" benefit from God's guidance?

Those who strive for Us, We shall surely guide them to Our Path. Qur'án 29:69

And they (the dwellers in the Hellfire) said: If we had listened or relied on our power of reason, we would not have been the companions of the Hellfire. Qur'án 67:10

Reflect on the meaning of the following verse. In this verse, with perfect clarity, God informs us that the "Hour" will come in a concealed way (clandestinely), so that each person be rewarded according to his nature and endeavor:

The "Hour" will surely come; I desire to conceal it [its coming] that every soul may be rewarded according to its striving. Qur'án 20:15

The mystery of the meaning of the above verse is both hidden and manifest—millions of believers have read this verse but have not asked themselves:

- Why does God conceal the time of the coming of the Hour?
- What is the connection between "concealment" and "striving"?

Finding answers to these two questions discloses the mystery of the verse.

The undetected coming of the "Day of God" and the Promised One of God have also been confirmed in the Scriptures of the Religions before Islám:

Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake .... Revelation 16:15

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 1 Thessalonians 5:2

Chapter 12 of the Book of Daniel, from the beginning to the end, relates the conditions and signs of the coming of the Promised Ones of our time; even the date of the appearance of each of the two Promised Ones has been prophesied. Below is an example of a prophecy from the Book of Daniel:

> At that time Michael,* the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered .... But you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge. Daniel 12:1–4

In addition to testing and separating the far-sighted and insightful people from the superficial and short-sighted people, the concealment of the "Hour" of the appearance of the Promised One behind the veil of "allegorical" terms has another purpose. Consider the Báb, He was a youth of great gentleness and meekness Who stood up, calmly and confidently, against the insults and bold attacks of His enemies. He did not defend Himself. He was alone and without support, yet He withstood the anatagonism of thousands of deceitful and cruel people. What had those people heard or known about Him? They heard from others or saw with their own eyes that this tranquil Youth transformed scores of souls from various classes—friends, family and other believers—with His captivating conduct and the influence of His words. Those people considered their security, even their existence to be endangered by this self-proclaimed Promised One. In the eyes of those tyrannical people, it was a necessity of their religion and belief to destroy Him. This was seen as an easy path to salvation. Without the slightest fear or concern, they would have torn Him to pieces. Ask yourselves: If those cruel and superstitious people had become aware of the ultimate fate of that innocent and unperturbable Youth, what would they have done? Would they have allowed Him even one extra day to propagate God's Message to the people?

Were the religious or temporal leaders willing to endanger their comfort or status? These tyrannical people used the Qur'án as their commerce and their faith as a tool to accumulate wealth. What would they have done if they had become aware of the danger of losing their "trade" and their "wealth"? They would have wanted to eliminate that Youth and His followers at the first available opportunity. However, the appearance of the divinely-appointed Promised One like "a thief in the night" gave Him the chance to befittingly convey the "**Great Announcement**" to the people. Had the Báb unveiled Himself from the start as the Promised Qá'im, the situation would have changed

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* Michael means "He Who is like God". This word refers to Bahá'u'lláh who is the Manifestation of the "Glory and Splendor" of God. The word "prince" is because Bahá'u'lláh was descended from Sassanid kings. In the Book of Revelation, He is referred to as the "King of Kings".

completely, and God's Plan would not have been fulfilled. Protecting that Youth in the midst of the enemies and tyrannical people was part of God's plan. If they had become aware of His inner powers before the appointed time His life story would have changed. However, after the fulfillment of the Promise and the completion of the Plan, there were no further obstacles to His sacrifice, which was His ultimate desire:

> *I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love.*[9] The Báb

Consider this: If the year of the appearance of the Promised One had been stated clearly and without the "veil of allegorical language", what would have been the consequences? The disclosure of the year of the fulfillment of the Promise would have been an invitation to many dishonest and worldly people to declare themselves, in that year, to be the Promised One. This may have caused some confusion in recognizing the Messenger of God among the many deceitful, mocking enemies of God. Instead of being guidance for the faithful believers, God's prophecy would have been misused by false-hearted and hypocritical people. Therefore, God concealed this great mystery from people in the veil of allegorical language, and protected it from abuse. By the Will of God, only a 25-year-old Youth from Shiraz arose and proclaimed Himself to be the Promised Qá'im—at the appointed time, in AH 1260. Then, after He had publicly made His claim, it was too late for anyone else to make God's guidance a tool of misleading the people—even if they became aware of the mystery of the prophecy.

Despite many proofs of His Truth, most people still remain captives to their doubts and misgivings. Now, if instead of the Báb, hundreds of people around the world had declared themselves to be the Promised One, how much more difficult it would have been for the believers to investigate those claims! In that case, how would have God's prophecy been of any use to us?

Divine Scriptures continually invite us to ponder and reflect; to be a human means we must use our intelligence and power of reason. The concealment of the signs of the coming Revelation impels us to think and investigate, to use our gifts of thought and reason—these are the greatest signs of being a human. That is why God has said **that He has kept it hidden to reward each soul according to his efforts** (Qur'án 20:15). If any thoughtless person could discover the precious gem of faith without effort or search, of what value would that gem be?

God has decreed that only pure-hearted and perceptive people be admitted into His Court. The best way for God to fulfill His desire has been to conceal the prophecies and proofs behind the "veil of allegory". This veil has, in all ages, separated the loyal and deserving believers from others; that is why the Resurrection Day has been called the "Day of Severing". Not only the announcements of the Qur'án, but also the announcements of all other divine Scriptures regarding the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our era, are based on this principle. Only with such a perspective can we examine the

announcements of the divine Scriptures regarding this or any other Faith, and weigh them in the balance of reason and understanding.

Many tidings of the Qur'án and other holy Books are hidden in mystery. The rising of the divine Sun and the shining of the Light of Knowledge have now made these mysteries clear and manifest. Because of its importance, this topic will be discussed in a different light, in the next chapter—Perspicuous and Allegorical Verses.

> We have revealed this Book to Thee only that Thou mayest clarify for them the things regarding which they dispute. Qur'án 16:64

> *... it is therefore incumbent upon every one to seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart and from the Treasuries of divine mysteries regarding the intricacies of God's Faith and the abstruse allusions in the utterances of the Day-springs of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not."** [10] Bahá'u'lláh

We shall know God through His Words

> *Say: Verily the Truth hath come from God, through the power of the infallible Truth; then whosoever hath chosen God, hath indeed chosen Thee; and whosoever turneth away from the Truth and the Book—verily, God can well dispense with all creatures.*[11] The Báb

> *This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.*[12] Bahá'u'lláh

> See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. Revelation 3:8

1 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 166. (prov. tr.)
2 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 177. (prov. tr.)
3 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 324. (prov. tr.)
4 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 157. (prov. tr.)
5 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, pp. 161–162. (prov. tr.)
6 The Hidden Words by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 51–52.
7 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 254–255 (gr. 285)
8 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 255 (gr. 285)
9 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 59.
10 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 191–192 (gr. 212)
11 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', p. 108. (prov. tr.)
12 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 85–86 (gr 182)

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* Qur'án 16:43

22
Perspicuous and Allegorical Verses

According to the testimony of the Qur'án, God's Revelation is of two kinds: perspicuous and allegorical.

> Some of the verse are perspicuous ... and others are allegorical. Qur'án 3:7

Whenever the intention of a Revelation is to convey a clear meaning, such utterance is of the "perspicuous" kind.

> *Perspicuous verses are those in which the divine intention is conveyed through the verse itself. There is no need for any other proof or explanation to demonstrate their truth.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Verses that explain the laws and virtues are considered perspicuous; it is not difficult to understand these verses. In contrast, whenever the intention of a Revelation is to express a meaning other than the outward meaning, those verses are allegorical; this kind of Revelation contains many mysteries, and they have continually prevented superficial people from recognizing the Messengers of God.

Unlike the traditions, the Qur'án and other scriptures speak of the next Manifestation using only allusions, and these allusions are difficult to comprehend—allusions that have been clothed in an allegorical language. They are signs veiled in mystery:

> *In the Books of that people* [the Muslims], *the advent of the coming Revelation hath been implicitly mentioned in symbolic language, through abstruse allusions and veiled and hidden verses.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Only after the fulfillment of the Promise of former Revelations, are the meanings of "*abstruse allusions* and *veiled verses*" manifested and made visible. It has not been decreed that the believers be informed of the meaning of these verses before the appointed time.

Interpretation may occur in two ways: permissible and not permissible. The interpretation of allegorical verses is permissible and necessary; the interpretation of perspicuous verses is not permissible.

> *Interpretation is limitless in its range. One interpretation is according to the good-pleasure of God, another repudiateth Him Who is the Truth.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The purpose of all interpretations and the expression of the inner meanings of the words and verses hath been the attainment to the knowledge of God.*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

During the passage of ages, people have changed the meaning of the words of God, whether perspicuous or allegorical; that is why Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *Beware, O people, lest ye pervert the words of God from their true meaning.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

We each have a different understanding of the meaning of the Word of God—this is to be expected. The problem arises when we insist on the correctness of our own understanding and belittle the thoughts and views of others. Such thinking has always been the cause of disputes and divisions of former religions. Bahá'u'lláh warns His followers against such actions:

> *Beware lest any disputes arise among the friends of God* [the Bahá'ís] *regarding the meaning of the Words.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

The term "interpretation" is usually used when a meaning other than the outward meaning is inferred from a "perspicuous" word. Over the course of history rebellious people have used their interpretations in order to refuse to obey the injunctions of God's Messengers.

After the Qur'án was revealed, the Imams of Islám, who were divinely inspired and "grounded in knowledge", explained some of its verses. Examples of these explanations related to the Bahá'í Faith have been discussed in this book.

History proves that even the greatest religious leaders have been incapable of comprehending the meaning of "allegorical" verses. However, at the time of the appearance of the Messengers, some learned, faithful and virtuous scholars have been enabled to discover the meaning of some of the utterances of God. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í and Siyyid Káẓim Rashtí, two of the greatest scholars of Islám, were such people. These two learned scholars discussed the signs and prophecies of the appearance of the Promised One, and taught these truths to their students, thereby, preparing them for the "Day of God" and the "Great Announcement".

> *The honor of* [Shaykh] *Aḥmad is in this, that he became aware of some of the mysteries of prophethood and became the bearer of the trust of God.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

When the Báb revealed the Cause of God for this day, many of the students of these two scholars recognized and accepted His Message. They raised the banner of the "Great Announcement" and strove to propagate His Cause. However, the knowledge of insightful, learned scholars concerning the inner meaning of the allegorical words, compared to the knowledge of the Messengers of God, is like an atom compared to the brilliant sun. Bahá'u'lláh explains that compared to the ocean of His knowledge, all the knowledge in the world is no more than a drop. He then begs forgiveness from God for even such a comparison.[8]

In every age, with the appearance of His Messengers, it is God's practice to disclose, the mystery of His words, which—like the face of a beautiful bride—is hidden behind a veil of mystery. As foretold in the prophecies of the Qur'án, the two Promised Ones of our age removed, for the first time,the veil of ambiguity from the face of many Qur'anic mysteries, and disclosed the meaning of allegorical terms.

> *Through Him all things have been revealed, every mystery divulged, and every hidden secret brought to light.*[9] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Until the time when the hand of divine power unsealeth the Wine of spiritual knowledge, none is or will be aware of it ... In like manner, until the hand of the power of My former Manifestation* [the Báb] *unsealed the treasury of the Qur'anic knowledge, no one had understood.*[10] Bahá'u'lláh

The Qur'án clearly states that its interpretation has not yet been revealed:

> Nay, that which they comprehend not [of the Qur'án] they deny; whereas its interpretation hath not yet been revealed to them. Qur'án 10:39

> We have indeed brought to them a Book .... Do they expect other than this that, one day, its interpretation will come? Qur'án 7:52–53

> It is for Us to gather it [the Qur'án] .... Then it is for Us to explain it. Qur'án 75:17, 19

> On the Day of Resurrection [our time] He will surely explain to you that wherein ye differ. Qur'án 16:92

The above verses explain the following points:

- There are verses in the Qur'án that need an authorized explanation. These verses are called "allegorical" verses.
- God promises that on a particular "Day" He will clarify these verses for us. This Day can only be the day of the appearance of the Promised One.
- Denying what they do not comprehend alludes to the people's rebuttal of the verses that announce the coming of the Promised One. How would the believers recognize the Promised One when they have changed the meaning of these verses?

Who else but the Promised One is capable of explaining and interpreting the allegorical verses? Even if all the people of the world combine to assist one another they will not be capable of such a task. Therefore, the Promise of the explanation of the allegorical verses is the same as the Promise of the coming of a Messenger who has divine knowledge, rather than only human knowledge. Considering the prophecy ("they deny ...") and the challenge ("Do they expect ...?"), how could religious leaders and interpreters be certain that they comprehend the utterance of God? If they understood the meaning of the allegorical verses then why the Promise of the coming of an Expounder?

It has been God's method for each Messenger to explain the difficulties related to the Scriptures of former Religions.

> O people of the Book! Verily Our Messenger hath come to you to make things clear to you, after a period of time between the Messengers. Qur'án 5:19

> Hath not come to them the explanation of that which was in former Books? Qur'án 20:133

> O people of the Book! Verily Our Messenger hath come to you explaining much from the Book that ye kept hidden. Qur'án 5:15

How have leaders of religions concealed, and continue to conceal, the news of the appearance of the Messengers? The most common way they do this is by distorting the true meaning of the verses:

> Then the wrong-doers among them change the utterance to other than what hath been said to them. Qur'án 7:162

> They pervert the text of the Word of God. Qur'án 4:46

How is the Word of God perverted? Religious leaders find different meaning for specific words. Some of the best examples of this are the changing of the meaning of "Spirit of Truth", khátam ("seal") and wasaṭ ("middle").

Misinterpretation by Christians

Expression	Interpretation
Spirit of Truth (John 16:13)	Holy Spirit

Misinterpretation by Muslims

Word(s)	Meaning	Interpretation
Khátam (Qur'án 33:40)	seal	last, i.e. final
Ummatan wasaṭan (Qur'án 2:143)	nation in the middle (preceded and followed by other nations in time)	moderate or just nation (best, balanced or just nation—neither extreme nor unbalanced)

In alluding to Muḥammad, Jesus gave the glad-tiding of the coming of the **Spirit of Truth**. Christian leaders interpret **Spirit of Truth** to mean the appearance of the **Holy Spirit** at a specific time to a group of Christians! By denying and distorting the meaning of the **Spirit of Truth** they conceal, from the Christians, the most important announcement of the Bible regarding Muḥammad. To understand the consequence of the distortion of these words in the destiny of humanity, let us examine how Christians distorted the true meaning of this joyful news and prophecy. Jesus has said:

> I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when the Spirit of Truth comes he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.*
>
> John 16:12–14

The Qur'án perfectly fulfills the prophecy of the above first verse—it contains many spiritual truths not found in the Bible. Most of the information recorded in the New Testament consists of the views and explanations of the Apostles and other followers of Christ, rather than the utterances of Jesus. The Qur'án is so rich in spiritual truths that it could be called the "Encyclopedia of Spiritual Knowledge". According to the testimony of God, it contains every *"thing green or sere"*.†

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* All the signs prophesied by Jesus were fulfilled by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Indeed, we can consider all Messengers are the Spirit of Truth.

† Qur'án 6:59

- ***"He will not speak of his own"***: God repeatedly testifies that the Qur'án is a Revelation from Him and not from Muḥammad.
- ***"He will tell you of what is yet to come"***: What announcement could be more important than the joyful tidings of the coming of two great Messengers? The verses of the Qur'án, from beginning to the end, herald such a Revelation—the Great Announcement.
- ***"He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you"***: Muḥammad bestowed the most magnificent title on Jesus, referring to Him as the "**Spirit of God**". Can a title more magnificent than this be imagined? The Christians pride themselves in the title, the "**Son of God**", and continually say: "Jesus is the only Son of God"; whereas this title has repeatedly been applied to all the believers. However, no one has been honored with the title, the "Spirit of God".

In the Qur'án all the Messengers have been given the same station, and Jesus and Muḥammad are considered equal. In addition to honoring Jesus, the Qur'án mentions many of the baseless assumptions and imaginings of the Christians, thereby elevating the majesty and grandeur of Christ. For example, the Christians generally misinterpret the words of their Messenger by saying: **"God is one, but is three persons, one of whom is Jesus."** With great emphasis, the Qur'án considers this view to be a distortion of the Word of God.*

Christians do not accept the fulfillment of the above prophecies in the manifestation of Muḥammad. They believe Jesus is the only Savior of humanity, and that any Messenger appearing in any other name is a false prophet. Christian leaders say the glad-tidings regarding the "coming of the Spirit of Truth" refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon a group of disciples of Jesus while they were celebrating the Festival of Pentecost. In this simple way, the early Christian theologians changed the meaning of the signs and prophecies, and concealed from their followers this glad-tiding of the coming of Muḥammad as a new Messenger from God. If their doctrine were true, Christian leaders should be able to answer the following questions convincingly:

- What "truths" did the **Holy Spirit** teach the participants at that festival—truths that Jesus had not taught His followers in three years? Which of the thousands of Christian sects know those truths?
- What prophecies did the **Holy Spirit** explain to that group?
- Is the **Holy Spirit** subject to coming and going?
- Was not the **Holy Spirit** present during the time of Christ? Why, then should He have come later?
- What did the **Holy Spirit** teach the believers in those few days or hours that they could not bear to hear from Jesus?
- Does the **Holy Spirit** have a tongue and speak as humans do?

The answer is that none of the conditions described above were fulfilled in any manner at that festival.

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* This author has written a lengthy chapter about this belief. Please refer to *Muḥammad: The Spirit Who Glorified Jesus.*

Misinterpretations by Christians should be a lesson for Muslims. Their leaders have also followed the same path as the Christian leaders—by misinterpreting khátam, they have prevented Muslims from recognizing their Promised One. It is astonishing how the misuse of one word has had such a great effect on the fate of humanity, and has caused people to deviate from the straight path.

It is puzzling that Persian translators of the Qur'án do not translate the Arabic phrase **Khátam an-Nabiyyín** ("**Seal of the Prophets**") into Persian? Why don't they even place the meaning of this phrase in parenthesis so that the readers may become aware of this great mystery? If the word **Khatim** ("end", "last") had been used in the Qur'án instead of Khátam, would the translators have used a Persian word meaning the "Last"? If we asked a hundred thousand Iranians about the meaning of the phrase "**Khátam un-Nabíín**" how many of them would say "**Muhr-i-Payámbarán**" (**Seal of the Prophets**)? The expression translating into "Seal of the Prophets" is not being heard among the Iranians. The difference between **khátam** and **kháatim** is similar to the difference between **ákhar** ("other") and **ákhir** ("end"); a small change in pronunciation completely changes the meaning of the word.

At the time of their appearance, the Messengers always explain the issues that had been difficult to understand in former Scriptures; this has always been and continues to be true. It is up to us to learn from history.

> When Jesus came with clear proofs, He said: Verily, I have come to you with Wisdom, and to make clear for you some of that concerning which ye differ .... But among them [Christians] sects appeared. Woe unto the wrong-doers! What torment they shall face on a painful Day! Qur'án 43:63–65

Examples of allegorical words

> *The [outer] form of the Words of God are treasuries of Truth; and the meanings they conceal are the pearls of knowledge. The unerring hand of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all withholdeth the people from the knowledge thereof. When the good-pleasure of God wisheth to unseal the Words with the Hand of power, the people become apprised of their meaning. For instance, consider the words of the Qur'án. Reflect how they embraced all the treasuries of the knowledge of the divine Essence -- blessed and glorified be He – and how, night and day, the divines would recite them and pen their interpretations. Nonetheless, they were all powerless to reveal even a single letter of those pearls concealed in the treasury of the Divine Words. When the Promised Day came, the Hand of the power of My former Manifestation (the Báb) broke the seal of that divine treasury, according to the capacity and state of men.*[11] Bahá'u'lláh

Consider, for example, the following allegorical words related to the appearance of the Promised One of our age. Some of these words have a number of meanings, only some are mentioned here:

Allegorical words	Spiritual meaning
Heaven	The Religion of God
Sun	God's Messenger and His Words
Stars	Religious Leaders

Mountains	Powerful people, powerful institutions, especially religious institutions
Food, bread	Spiritual perfections, spiritual food
Rain	God's grace and mercy
Hell fire	The torment of remoteness from God (in Persian we sometimes say: "I burn and bear in separation from him/her")
Water of life	Spiritual life; Divine teachings (laws); Word of God
Earth	Human heart, Recognition, Knowledge
Earthquake	Disorder in society and disintegration of old social order; disturbance in thoughts and beliefs
Trumpet blast	Proclamation of the Promised Cause
Wind	Testing of faith of people; doubts and misgivings
Cloud or smoke	Obstacles to the recognition of the Manifestations of God
Sea	Assumptions, imaginings, suspicions; stormy world
Maids of Heaven*	Beautiful and pure truths, and mysteries
Youth (Ghilmán)	Those who are strong in the love of God, and steadfast in belief, obedience and service to God
Satan	The deceitful self
Drunkenness	Lack of spiritual awareness

Wherefore hath the drunkenness of negligence encompassed all the people?[12]
Bahá'u'lláh

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom.[13]
Bahá'u'lláh

Not every ear is worthy to hearken to His hidden mysteries; and not every eye deserveth to behold the veiled huris of inner meaning of His Divine knowledge.[14]
Bahá'u'lláh

Beware that ye divest not yourselves of the raiment of Divine guidance. Drink ye your fill from the Cup which the Youths of Heaven have raised above your heads. Thus biddeth you He Who hath more mercy upon you than your own selves, He Who asketh not any recompense or thanks from you.[15]
Bahá'u'lláh

In the following utterance, pure and new thoughts, and inner meanings, have been likened to a "Bride":

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* A poem by Rúmí is a good description of those ignorant people, who in hopes of being rewarded with beautiful women, kill themselves and religious minorities; it is also about short-sighted people who take the literal meaning of ḥúrí and ghilmán, and mock the Qur'án:
From the Qur'án we took the inner meaning
And left for the ignorant the outer shell

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal.[16]

Bahá'u'lláh

As an example, let us study the two words "Heaven" and "earth" to see what similarities exist between the "Realm of religion" and the "Realm of Heaven", and what similarities exist between the "Realm of human heart" and the "Realm of earth":

Realm of the world	Realm of religion and the human spirit
Heaven	The station of religion is high and overshadows our spirit, like heaven.
Sun	Our spiritual life is dependent on the Light of God's Manifestation; our inner being and joy is related to our heart's connection to God's Manifestation.
Moon	Successors to the Manifestations of God who partake of Their Light and bestow it on others.
Day (noon)	The Day of the appearance of God's Manifestations
Light	God's Words are the Light of our path.
Earth	The seed of faith is planted in the hearts of men.
Rain	God's grace and favor showers upon us from the Heaven of His Cause; our spirit is refreshed by this.
Stars	Religious leaders and scholars are like shining stars in the heaven of religion. At the dawn of a new Day, when the Sun is shining again, the leaders of the former religion lose their light, and "fall from heaven"; the earth of their hearts is darkened.
Cloud	There are obstacles in religion that must be overcome; such as the acceptance of the Spirit of God in a human form. There are obstacles in our hearts that prevent us from seeing the Light of God in His Manifestations.
Thunder and lightning	Once we declare our belief, we are tested; these tests reveal our spiritual capacity; we disclose whatever is in our hearts.
Rising of the sun	In every age a new Manifestation rises from the heaven of the Cause (Religion) of God, and bestows Light on us; the spirit of man is freed from darkness of ignorance.
Change in the point of the rising of the Sun	In every age the Manifestation of God rises from a new location; in every age a particular people are outwardly honored by its nearness to the Manifestation of God.
Setting of the Sun	The period of the former religion is ended; the light of the former religion returns to its Origin and Transmitter, God. The heart of man is darkened, and it is time for the appearance of a new Manifestation.

The key to the treasury of the mysteries of the divine Scriptures is in the hands of the Manifestations of God alone. With their aid, our understanding of that precious treasury is immensely increased. Whatever was complicated and concealed becomes clear and visible. It is not possible to discover the mysteries in darkness; the radiance of the new Divine Sun makes clear and manifest all that we need.

> *That which hath been concealed in the knowledge of God and recorded in His Books is now reveled.*[17] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O people of knowledge! Fear ye God Who speaketh to you through the Remembrancw! God teacheth you the meaning of the Book, through the tongue of the Remembrance.*[18] The Báb

> *...it is therefore incumbent upon every one to seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart and from the Treasuries of divine mysteries regarding the intricacies of God's Faith and the abstruse allusions in the utterances of the Day-springs of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not."*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

According to God's testimony, with the appearance of the Promised One, the light of knowledge and understanding will shine The rays of the light of knowledge will be so powerful that the followers of the New Faith of God will have no need of the utterances and the interpretations of former leaders and scholars of religion. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states that the believers in His Faith will be the source of such knowledge and wisdom, not even one letter of which has been, or will ever be, known to others , even if they were to study for a thousand years.[20] He states that the believers in this new Faith can reach a state wherein the fountains of knowledge and wisdom will continually flow from their hearts.[21]

If Muslims have difficulties in understanding the hidden meanings of the verses of their Book, then the Qur'án encourages them to ask the followers of the new Faith of God for answers:

> Ask ye, therefore, the followers of the Remembrance, if ye know not. Qur'án 21:7

The early denials of the Messengers of God and the divisions among the believers in different world religions in every age, have always been due to misunderstanding or a lack of understanding of the allegorical verses. In order to examine the consequences of these problems it is useful to ask: "Why do Christians reject Islám?" The answer is because they believe that the signs and prophecies recorded in their Scriptures about the "Return of Christ" have not been fulfilled by the coming of Muḥammad. They do not realize that the problem is their misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the allegorical terms. According to the Bahá'í sacred Writings the Promise of the "Return of Christ" has been fulfilled by the coming of Muḥammad inasmuch as the Divine Spirit was radiant in both of these Messengers of God. The difference between them is that they each appeared from a different horizon; it is not about the light

they bestowed upon the world. Let us study a few examples of the signs and prophecies recorded in the Bible regarding the "Return of Christ".

The signs of the Return of Christ

The allegorical words	The inner meaning of the words
I will come from heaven	From the heaven of the will, knowledge and mercy of God; from the heaven of the Command and religion of God
Upon clouds	Upon assumptions and prejudices that prevent the people from beholding the Promised One
Every eye shall see Me	Whoever has inner sight (perception) can see Me.
The stars shall fall	As at the rising of the sun, the stars will be invisible, and at the time of the rising of the Messengers of God, religious leaders of the age will fall from their spiritual station and rank, i.e. they shall have no position in the sight of God, unless they recognize the new religion of God.
The City of God shall come down from heaven	A new plan for civilization will descend, by the Will of God, from the heaven of Revelation.
Mountains shall be flattened	Outworn institutions, and powerful and despotic rulers will lose their influence.
A new Heaven will be raised	The new Faith of God will encompass the people of the world.
A new earth will appear	The hearts of the people will be renewed and revived.

All of these signs were fulfilled with the appearance of Muḥammad. However, the vast majority of the Christians are utterly unaware of the inner meaning of these allegorical words, and have refused to acknowledge that great Promised One. However, those who had inner eyes saw the Light of God in that Messenger of God, as the light of the sun, and hastened unto Him.

The Sun

> And thou mightest have seen the Sun when it arose... Qur'án 18:17

What Sun? The Sun of the glory and majesty of God reflected in His Messengers, the Sun of Truth and Certitude:

> *The Sun of Truth hath risen and shineth above the Horizon of knowledge.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In this Day the Sun of certitude is shining forth.*[23] Bahá'u'lláh

> *In this Day the Sun hath shone forth from the Horizon of God's loving-kindness.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on the living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Luke 1:78–79

> *Enable, then, Thy servants, O my God, to recognize the Day-Star that hath shone forth above the horizon of Thine irrevocable decree and purpose, and suffer them*

not to be deprived of the Paradise which Thou, by Thy name, the All-Glorious, hast called into being in the heavens of Thine exalted omnipotence.[25] Bahá'u'lláh

In an Arabic poem, Qaṣídiy-i-Varqá'íyyih ("Ode of the Dove"), Bahá'u'lláh writes:

... Through its Revelation all Suns grew dim.[26] Bahá'u'lláh

Sun, stars and mountains

When the Sun is darkened, the stars lose their light, and the mountains disappear. Qur'án 81:1–3

- What "Sun" is darkened (folded up)? The Sun of the former religion whose radiance returns to God, after a "set time" (Qur'án 7:34)—period of one thousand years.
- Which "stars" lose their light? The stars that shine in the heaven of the former religion; the religious leaders who were guiding the people to the straight path.
- What "mountains" disappear? The established institutions, which like mountains, were strong and firm; those, in a former religion, who were trusted by the people.

The first 98 verses of Sura 20 Ṭá' Há' cover the story of Moses. This section will now study verse 99 onwards where the past tense changes into the present and the future:

In this way We relate unto thee the story of what hath transpired in the past. Qur'án 20:99

They will ask Thee concerning the mountains. Say: My Lord will blast them [and scatter them] as dust. Qur'án 20:105

Despotic and tyrannical rulers and religious leaders have held the reign of power and influence over the past ages. The tradition of having religious leaders to explain and control a religion has been abolished with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. The once well-established tyrannical rulers and powerful religious leaders have, like dust in a storm, largely been destroyed—they are only mentioned in the pages of history.

In their place [the mountains] ye shall then see nothing crooked or curved. Qur'án 20:107

God has promised that a just system of government will be established to prevent the abuse and misuse of power of the former dictatorial rulers and religious leaders.

On that Day they will follow the Caller in Whom there is no crookedness. [He invites the people to the Straight Path.] Qur'án 20:108

The Caller is a reference to the Promised One of the age. As was mentioned in chapter 14, God summons the people to Baghdád (the Abode of Peace):

God summons the people to the Abode of Peace [Baghdád]. Qur'án 10:25

Let us examine further verses of Sura 20 Ṭá' Há' relating to the two Promised Ones of our time:

> And the voices are humbled before the Most Gracious [God]; only a faint sound [of the people's footsteps] is heard. Qur'án 20:108

The believers in the New Faith, with absolute servitude and humility, stand before the Promised One Who comes in the name of God—they obey His command without hesitation:

> On that Day no intercession availeth anyone save by the leave of the Merciful [God] and from him whom He accepteth [the Promised One]. Qur'án 20:109

> He knoweth what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not encompass it in knowledge. Qur'án 20:110

The believers who were admitted into the presence of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have testified that these two Promised Ones were aware of all their secrets.

> All faces shall be humbled before the One Who is the Living, Self-Subsisting; indeed the fate of the wrong-doers is hopelessness. Qur'án 20:111

Once again there is mention of the victory of the Religion of God, people's humility before the Messenger of God, and the fate of wrong-doers.

The gathering of the Sun and the Moon

Verses of the Qur'án also give the glad-tidings of the appearance of the "Moon of Guardianship", i.e. 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:

> When ... the Sun and the Moon appear together; that Day man (any man) will ask: Where is the refuge? Alas, no refuge is there on that Day save to Thy Lord. Qur'án 75:7–12

The allegorical verse below also alludes to the gathering together of the Sun and the Moon:

> I swear by the Sun and its radiance, and by the Moon when it comes after (the Sun). Qur'án 91:1–2

In the following utterance Muḥammad likens Himself to the Sun and 'Alí to the Moon:

> I am as the Sun and Ali is as the Moon.[27]

Regarding the interpretation of "by the Moon when it comes after it" Bahá'u'lláh states:

> *The Moon is the station of Vicegerency; He it is Who followeth the Sun of Prophethood; He is manifested after the Prophet and ariseth in the promotion of His Cause among the people.*[28] Bahá'u'lláh

Qur'án 91:1–2 announces the accompaniment of the "Sun of Prophethood" with the "Moon of Vicegerency". In the Dispensation of Muḥammad, the "Moon of Vicegerency" was 'Alí, the Commander of the faithful. In this Dispensation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh) and the Guardian (Shoghi Effendi)

occupy that station and position. 'Abdu'l-Bahá always accompanied Bahá'u'lláh and, after Him, spread the light of God throughout the world. That responsibility was later entrusted to the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi.

Since Qur'án 91:1–2 refers to the future, the verses primarily refer to the two "Moons of our age", Who as one soul, one after another, perfected the responsibility of vicegerency.

The Heaven, the earth

> They do not appreciate the greatness of God. On the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be held in His grasp, and the Heavens folded up in His right hand. Qur'án 39:67

What earth is in His mighty grasp? The earth of the human heart and its soul. On what Day does this event occur? On the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of the Promised One. Which heavens are folded up? The heavens of former religions.

> *"When the heaven shall be cloven asunder."* By "heaven" is meant the heaven of divine Revelation, which is elevated with every Manifestation, and rent asunder with every subsequent one.*[29] Bahá'u'lláh

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh mentions a number of meanings for the word "Heaven".

> *In the utterances of the divine Luminaries the term "heaven" hath been applied to many and divers things; such as the "heaven of Command," the "heaven of Will," the "heaven of the divine Purpose," the "heaven of divine Knowledge," the "heaven of Certitude," the "heaven of Utterance," the "heaven of Revelation," the "heaven of Concealment," and the like.*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

Light, heavens and earth

> God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. Qur'án 24:35

God is the Light of which "heavens"? The heavens of religions. God is the Light of which earth? The earth of the human heart and its spirit.

> He [God] sent down water from the heaven upon you that He may purify you and remove from you the stain of Satan, and your hearts may be made strong and your steps be made firm. Qur'án 8:11

- From which "heaven" water will descend? From the heaven of the Will and Command of God.
- With what "water" does God purify His servants? With the water of life or water of His teachings.
- The stain of which "Satan" does He remove? The stain of the Satan of self and desire.
- What "steps" will He cause to be firmed? The steps of certitude and faith in God.

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* Qur'án 82:1

> Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths. But God hath willed to prefect His light .... Qur'án 9:32

What "light" do people want to extinguish? The light that shines from the Sun of the heaven of the Will of God, i.e. the Promised One, upon the world. With what mouths? With mouths full of falsehood and calumny.

Heaven, smoke

> Yea, they are busy with diversions and doubts. Watch for the day when the heaven shall give out a palpable smoke, enveloping the people. This will be a painful torment. [The people say]: Please God! Remove the torment from us; we are believers. [God saying in response]: What! When My Remembrance [the Báb] was sent to them [Were they reminded?] Again, a Messenger [Bahá'u'lláh] was sent to them with clear signs; they turned away from Him and said: A crazed teacher! Qur'án 44:9–14

Let us study the above verses:

> The people are busy with diversions and doubts. Qur'án 44:9

This is the perfect description of the people of our time. Whenever they hear the news of the appearance of the Promised One, they view it with doubts and misgivings. They do not believe there is any truth in this announcement. Their amusement is the affairs of the world.

> Watch then for the day when the heaven shall give out a palpable smoke, enveloping the people. This will be a painful torment. Qur'án 44:10–11

Like "clouds", "smoke" is a barrier between us and God. Remoteness or separation from God, and deprivation from the recognition of the Promised One of our time, is the greatest "torment" in both worlds for our soul.

> [After their journey through this life, people who are tormented say:] O Lord! Remove from us the torment, we are believers. Qur'án 44:12

> What! When My Remembrance [the Báb] was sent to them [Of what benefit was My Remembrance *Dhikr* to them]? Again a Messenger was sent to them with clear signs and they turned away from Him and said: A crazed teacher! Qur'án 44:13–14

As we have seen before, the Dhikr is a title of the Báb. He used this title and its derivatives more than any other titles. This verse demonstrates that Dhikr is not just a reference to the Qur'án. God is referring to the appearance of someone named the Dhikr, and this person is compared to a Messenger Whom the people considered to be crazy.

> *This Remembrance hath come from God. Let him who desireth choose the path ato the Remembrance of God.*[31] The Báb

> *They that deny the verses of God are the ones who have strayed far from Him. Not a single letter of their deeds shall be acceptable unto God; these, verily, are the companions of the nethermost fire. Those who wrongfully rule amongst men, after they have heard the verses of God and turned away from the decree of the Remembrance, are the ones who have joined partners with God.*[32]
>
> The Báb

Muslim scholars accept that the term Dhikr in verse 44:13 refers to a person and not an event or Book, but they have failed to identify Him. Yúsuf 'Alí believed that Dhikr may refer to someone named 'Al-Amín who appeared before Muḥammad among the tribes of Quraysh.

The folding of the heaven

> The Day when We shall roll up the heaven like a rolled-up written scroll. Just as we began the first creation, We shall repeat it [create a new creation]. Qur'án 21:104

Which "heaven" is rolled up? The heaven of the former religion. What would be created anew? A spiritual world encompassed by the new Faith of God, along with a new "heaven", "sun", "moon" and "stars".

Seven Heavens, Days and Lamps

> He completed the seven Heavens in two Days, and revealed "His Command" in each Heaven; and adorned the heaven of this world with Lamps and guarded it. This is the decree of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Qur'án 41:12

- **"Seven Heavens"**: Is a reference to the seven divine religions or the seven stages of the evolution of humanity.
- **"In two Days"**: These are the two stages in the spiritual evolution of humanity. The **stage of creation and training** and the **stage of perfection or maturity**. Each of previous religions has had a particular role in our spiritual growth and training. A new stage has begun in human history with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. Humanity will gradually manifest its spiritual capacities to the utmost after the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

  The **First Day** can be referred to as the **Day of Growth**, and the **Second Day** as the **Day of Perfection**. Human history before the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith and is known in the Bahá'í Writings as the "Prophetic Cycle". The emergence of Bahá'í Faith inaugurated what is known asthe "Age of Fulfillment".* Prophecy means foretelling the future by divine inspiration. All previous religions have announced the future appearance of the Bahá'í Faith—they have given the glad-tidings that the "Day of God" will eventually unfold and the world will attain a stage of maturity and perfection.

- **"And revealed His Cause (Amr) in each of those Heavens"**: In each of those religions, the "Cause" or the "Faith" of God was revealed to the Messenger of that Faith. Again, we see that the use of Amr ("Cause") and "Heaven" in the verse conforms to the use of these two words in the following verse:

  > God directs the Cause (Amr) of the earth from the "Heaven". (The arrangement and ordering of the affairs of the world is in God's Hands) Qur'án 32:5 tr, 1

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* In the Bahá'í Faith these ages are also described as Universal cycles: 1. The "Adamic cycle" or the "Cycle of Prophecy", and 2. the "Bahá'í cycle" or the "Age of Fulfillment".

God sends His Cause (Amr) from the "Heaven" unto the earth. Qur'án 32:5 tr. 2

Verse 32:5 clearly explains the meaning of Amr ("Cause"). How does God send His Cause to us? Through Revelation:

In every Religion God sends His Cause (Amr) to us through Revelation.
Qur'án 32:5 (tr. 1)

He adorns the Heaven of every Religion with the ornament of Revelation.
Qur'án 32:5 (tr. 2)

- **"We adorned the heaven of this world with Lamps"**: Just as the stars beautify the sky, the righteous learned and leaders brighten the heaven of divine religion.

Say: Who is the Lord of the seven Heavens? Qur'án 23:86

The Lord of which "Heavens"? The seven Heavens of the great religions.

Once again, reflect on the following verse in which the date of the appearance of the Promised One is hidden:

He directs the Cause of the earth from heaven. Qur'án 32:5

What is the meaning of "heaven" in the above verse? Is the Amr ("Cause") of God suspended in the heaven like the earth? Is God in heaven? And from "there" He sends us something, or makes decisions? It is clear that the "heaven" in the above verse has a spiritual meaning.

The Biblical statement regarding the **"Return of Christ" from "heaven"** is equivalent to the Qur'anic verse about the "coming of the command and religion of God from heaven"; inasmuch as every Messenger is manifested in the world from the heaven of the Will of God in order to bring the command and the religion of God, and the gift of faith.

What occurs after the arrival of the "Cause" of God from "heaven"?

Then (that Cause) returneth to Him in a Day which is a thousand years according to your reckoning. Qur'án 32:5

The appearance of each of God's Messengers and the deliverance of His Message is followed by the return of that Message and Messenger to God, like the regular rising and setting of the sun, is an unalterable law of God.

The same conditions also apply to the Bahá'í Faith. It has been clearly specified in the Bahá'í Faith that other Messengers will appear in the future. After a period of at least a thousand years, another Messenger will appear for the guidance of humanity.

On the Day when there will be a blast in the Trumpet. Then the inhabitants of earth and heavens shall be filled with fear save those whom God pleaseth to spare. Qur'án 27:87

- What is the sound and the call that is raised? The voice and the call of the divine Promised One. What is breathed? The Spirit of God, the Spirit that bestows eternal life to the dead.
- Why are people fearful? They cannot bear to hear the heavenly call or the **"Great Announcement"**.
- Who are in the heavens? The leaders of religion who, like the stars, shine in the heaven of former religions.
- Who are on earth? The followers of those religious leaders who have been guided by those stars.
- Who will be protected? The people who, with pure hearts and humility, hear the call of the new Faith and the "Great Announcement".

> The Trumpet will be blown. Then all who are in the heavens and on the earth shall swoon away save such as God pleaseth (to spare). Then it (the Trumpet) is blown a second time; then they will rise to behold. The earth shall shine with the Light of its Lord. Qur'án 39:68–69

- Why do the inhabitants of the "earth and heavens" swoon away on hearing the Trumpet? Because they cannot bear to hear the call of God.
- Why are there two Trumpet blasts? Because the heavenly books have announced the appearance of two Promised Ones.
- Who are those who rise and behold? Those who awaken from the tomb of negligence and see the great Event with inner eyes.
- With what Light will the earth shine? **"With the Light of God"**, **Bahá'u'lláh (the "Light of God")**.

The following verses also allude to the appearance of two Promised Ones on the Day of Resurrection:

> The Day when everything that can tremble shall be made to tremble, and a second trembling followeth. Qur'án 79:6–7

After the appearance of the new Faith, a new era begins in the life of humanity and the previous order is severely shaken.

> *The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.*[33] Bahá'u'lláh

Misinterpretation of the Word of God

Undoubtedly one of the reasons people are misled is their lack of understanding of the allegorical verses. Instead of asking the Promised One the meaning of these utterances, the believers asked the leaders of their religions. These leaders have then misled people through their misinterpretation of the Scriptures in order to protect their position and power. If they did not like the literal meaning of the words, i.e. they found them contrary to their personal interests, then they sought an inner meaning; on the other hand, if they did not like the inner meaning of any allegorical words, they used their outward meaning.

Think again about the interpretation of khátam ("seal) and wasaṭ ("middle"). As we saw, many Muslim scholars and leaders have interpreted khátam as meaning "last". What is their justification? A "seal" is often placed at the end of a letter. It is as if we interpret "hello" to be "first" (since it occurs at the start of a meeting) and "goodbye" to be "last". Similarly, we may interpret "morning", "noon" and "night" to mean "first", "middle" and "last" respectively.

Note with what clarity the All-Knowing God has informed us about the misinterpretation and misuse of His words:

> It is He Who revealed unto thee the Book. In it there are "perspicuous" verses that are the basis of the Book; other verses are "allegorical". However, those whose hearts tend to perversity, follow the allegorical meaning [of the perspicuous verses]; in that way, by changing God's intent, they sow discord among the people. Qur'án 3:7

It is clear that when the verse speaks of "follow the allegorical meaning thereof", it is meant the allegorical meaning of the perspicuous verses. Otherwise, to follow the allegorical meaning of the allegorical verses is not wrong, but wise.

Wasaṭ ("middle") is a word that does not need to be interpreted. One may say: "I was in the middle of a crowd". There is no allegory in this sentence. . Yet, instead of accepting the obvious meaning of Wasaṭ ("middle"), Muslim scholars have chosen the secondary and less common meaning of "moderate" and then interpreted it as "just". This is exactly what religious leaders have done with the word "Khátam". They have derived the meaning of "Last" from a word whose common meaning is not a reference to "finality" but to "confirmation of authenticity or approval".

> *Nay, rather, by corruption of the text is meant that in which all Muslim divines are engaged today, that is the interpretation of God's holy Book in accordance with their idle imaginings and vain desires.*[34] Bahá'u'lláh

> They pervert the text of the Word of God Qur'án 4:46

Beginning — Common meaning **wasaṭ = middle** — End

confirmer

Uncommon meaning **moderate—temperate**

Common meaning **khátam = seal**

Confirmation of former Messengers — Confirmation of future Messengers

Uncommon meaning **last**

Once more, study the verses of the Qur'án and see how God's prophecy regarding the misuse of His words, such as wasaṭ ("middle"), and khátam ("seal"), has been fulfilled. It is as though the following verse has been revealed regarding these two words:

> However those in whose hearts is perversity, follow the allegorical meaning of it [the perspicuous verses], seeking discord. Qur'án 3:7

If it is possible to misuse a word that has a clear and known meaning such as wasaṭ ("middle"), imagine how much greater is the probability of distorting the allegorical words.

In the case of the allegorical verses, the human mind is perfectly free to fly in whatever direction it may be inclined; it will find no obstacles in its way.

God tests us in different ways; and the use of allegorical verses is one of those ways:

> *Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil.*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

> But those who disbelieve say: What meaneth God by this parable? By it He misleadeth many and guideth many. None shall be misled save the profligate. Qur'án 2:26

Jesus taught many spiritual truths and mysteries through parables and stories:

> When he was alone, the twelve and others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" Mark 4:10–13

Muslims are not the only people who misinterpret the signs of the coming of the Promised One. The followers of other religions have also traveled on that same road. Note the following example. Jesus said: "My return is like a 'thief'"; and for the followers to recognize him, He counseled them to always be awake and aware, lest they fall in the sleep of negligence and be deprived of the opportunity of recognizing the Promised One.

Whenever Christians are asked to investigate the Bahá'í Faith, they respond: "By coming like a 'thief' is not meant that the Promised One appears like a common man and that, like a thief, his identity will be hidden from the ignorant. Rather it is meant that Jesus will appear 'suddenly', since a thief does not inform us and appears 'suddenly'." Note with what ease they distort the utterance of Jesus by changing the stealth and secrecy associated with a "thief" into a sudden but very evident appearance.

The phrase, "coming like a thief" is a perspicuous phrase; it is a phrase that does not need any interpretation or explanation. Nevertheless, since it is not according to the desire of Christians, they change the basic meaning of it. If it is this easy to change the meaning of perspicuous words, imagine how much easier it would be to change and distort the meaning of allegorical words!

Are the religious leaders of former religions, who do not even recognize their own personal interests, capable of comprehending the meaning of allegorical words? The text of the Qur'án states that no one is permitted to interpret the allegorical verses except the Promised One of the age. All others, even the most knowledgeable, are drowned in a sea of sin and error. Only the Promised One is God's Mouthpiece. Only He is authorized and able to say what He may, and do what He will. His knowledge is such that He can disclose seventy-one (71) meanings for one utterance; whether that utterance is perspicuous or allegorical. According to a ḥadíth, which has been confirmed in the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh:

> *We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain.*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

According to God's testimony, whoever opposes the interpretation of the Promised One of the age is a liar; inasmuch as to be a Muslim one must accept the decree of the Qur'án, not to reject or deny it:

> God will explain to them about Him [His truth] concerning Whom they differ; and those who disbelieve in Him, [in the end] will know they were liars. Qur'án 16:39

The Báb also confirms this matter:

> *In the coming Manifestation, the sincere will be distinguished from the insincere through their response to the divine summons.*[37]

About Whom do the people disagree? Clearly this must refer to the Promised One of the age who, through His Revelation, discloses the mysteries of the Scriptures and separates the sincere from the insincere.

> We have only revealed unto thee the Book that ye may explain to them about Him over Whom they differ, He Who is a source of guidance and mercy for the believers. Qur'án 16:64

The above verse teaches us that:

- At the time of the fulfillment of God's Promise, Muslims have differences regarding the Promised One.
- The purpose of the Qur'án is to clarify God's religion and to assist the believers.
- Muslims may have differing views, but those who are true believers will accept the Promised One.

Despite all the advice and warnings of the Qur'án, the vast majority of Muslim divines ignore the command of God, and they have been and are still busy with their idle fancies and vain imaginings.

> *At the time when the Promise was fulfilled and the Promised One made manifest, differences have appeared amongst the kindreds of the earth and each people hath followed its own fancy and idle imaginings.*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Through that Call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause.*

No sooner had that Revelation been unveiled to men's eyes than the signs of universal discord appeared among the peoples of the world, and commotion seized the dwellers of earth and heaven, and the foundations of all things were shaken.[39]
Bahá'u'lláh

The following verses demonstrate that, in cases of differences of opinion, Muslims should not rely on their own interpretation, but rather wait for the Promised One, who at the time of His appearance will manifest the Command and judgement of God:

We have revealed unto thee the Book, therein all things have been explained, a guide and mercy and glad-tidings for the Muslims .... On the Day of Resurrection [the Day of the Rising of God's Messenger] He will explain unto you whatever about which you disagree. Qur'án 16:89, 92

The Messengers of God are the source of divine mysteries and informed of all the spiritual meanings and mysteries of the heavenly Scriptures:

We have, of a truth, sent down this divinely-inspired Book unto Our Servant .... Ask ye then Him Who is Our Remembrance of its interpretation, inasmuch as He, as divinely-ordained and through the grace of God, is invested with the knowledge of its verses ....[40]
The Báb

Ask the followers of the Remembrance (Dhikr), if ye do not know. Qur'án 21:7

On the Day of Resurrection, God will judge between you concerning that wherein ye differ. Qur'án 22:69

Verily, thy Lord will judge between them, on the Day of Resurrection, regarding that wherein they differ. Qur'án 10:93

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh invites the people of the world to weigh all their differences in the balance of God's words:

Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: ... Beware, lest ye make it a cause of dissension amongst you.[41]
Bahá'u'lláh

According to the testimony of the Qur'án, the mysteries of that Book are hidden from strangers; only the pure-hearted are permitted to access those mysteries:

This indeed is a noble Qur'án, in a Book hidden; none shall touch it except the pure in heart. Qur'án 56:77–79

It has always been the Will of God that people strive to seek the gems of Truth with open eyes, a free will and a heart detached from their inclinations and vain desires. Bahá'u'lláh urges the people to see the Promised One with His own eyes; if they look with the eyes of others then they will never attain knowledge and faith.[42] He also counsels us to turn unto the divine Horizon with perceptive eyes and ears purified from the words and views of others, that we may see the light of Truth and hear the divine Call.[43]

If any soul were, in this Day, to fix his gaze upon aught but God and His Words, he will surely deviate from the Path of God and shall abide in the fire of hell.[44]
Bahá'u'lláh

The voice of the Bayán is lifted up, in this Day, with the utmost compassion and loving-kindness, saying: O My companions and friends! The Lord of the visible and the invisible is seated, today, upon the Throne of Revelation .... Deprive not yourselves, by reason of your idle fancies, from the living waters of certitude.[45]
Bahá'u'lláh

1 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 26. (prov. tr.)
2 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 108. (prov. tr.)
3 Náfiy-i-Tabín, vol. 1–4, p. 54. (prov. tr.)
4 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 21. (prov. tr.)
5 Amr va Khalq, vol. 3, p. 254. (prov. tr.)
6 Amr va Khalq, vol. 3, p. 255. (prov. tr.)
7 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 21. (prov. tr.)
8 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 205.
9 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 1, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
10 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 122. (prov. tr.)
11 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 129–130. (prov. tr.)
12 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 219. (prov. tr.)
13 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 327–328 (no. CLIII)
14 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 19. (prov. tr.)
15 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 258 (no. CXXI)
16 The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 51–52 (no. 82)
17 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 180. (prov. tr.)
18 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', p. 60. (prov. tr.)
19 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 191–192 (gr 212)
20 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 89.
21 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 89.
22 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 156. (prov. tr.)
23 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 191. (prov. tr.)
24 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 163. (prov. tr.)
25 Prayers and Meditation by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 27–28 (no. XXIV)
26 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 2, p. 321. (prov. tr.)
27 Mabádí-i-Istidlál, p. 364.
28 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 12. (prov. tr.)
29 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 44 (gr 46)
30 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 68 (gr 75)
31 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 194. (prov. tr.)
32 Kitáb'ur-Rúḥ, p. 126. (prov. tr.)
33 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136 (no. LXX)
34 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 86 (gr 93)
35 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 53 (gr 49)
36 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 255 (gr 285)
37 The Persian Bayán, p. 237. (prov. tr.)
38 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book), p. 31 (gr 35)
39 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 295–296 (no. CLXXVIII)
40 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 44–45.
41 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 136–137 (no. LXX)
42 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 199.
43 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 233.

44 Má'idíy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 187. (prov. tr.)
45 Má'idíy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 200. (prov. tr.)

Part 10
Announcements and other glad-tidings

This part contains three chapters:

23. **The appearance of a new creation**
24. **The appearance of other Manifestations**
25. **The remembrance of God**

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.[1]
Bahá'u'lláh

At this moment from the Wellspring of omnipotence, the divine Call was raised: No creation do We discern worthy of this Revelation and deserving of this Light. Thereupon a new and wondrous creation was called into being.[2] Bahá'u'lláh

There shall appear a new creation that shall quaff the living waters of divine knowledge from the cup of the Words of God.[3] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 7 (no. IV)
2 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 272–273. (prov. tr.)
3 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 94. (prov. tr.)

23
The appearance of a new creation

The Qur'án repeatedly announces the glad-tidings of the appearance of "a new creation" and "a new people". What "creation" and which "people"?

The making of "a new creation" or "replacing a people by another people" alludes to the appearance of the Messengers and their new followers, and the denial of these Messengers by the previous people. It is God's plan to send Messengers, which has been repeated, and will continue to be repeated, over the course of ages. The response of some followers of a Messenger has always been to deny the next Messenger. Prophet Húd spoke the following:

> Should ye turn away, still I have conveyed to you what I was sent with to you [the Message of God] and my Lord will replace you with a new people. Qur'án 11:57

Bahá'í sacred Writings make a lot of references to "a new creation":

> *The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.*
>
> *In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendorous light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things ....*[1] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *Beseech the One true God, exalted be His glory, to raise up, through His consummate power, a new creation that perchance it may bear the Trust of God.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *God willing, a new and wondrous creation ... shall be made manifest and shall shine resplendently.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *There shall appear a new creation that shall quaff the living waters of divine knowledge from the cup of the Words of God.*[4] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *At this moment from the Wellspring of Omnipotence and the Source of eternal holiness, the Crier cried out: No creation do We discern worthy of this Revelation and deserving of this Light. Thereupon He decreed a new and wondrous creation.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *God shall raise them up from the graves of their own selves, and recreate them even as He created them the first time. In truth, He is potent over all things.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> *By spiritual transformation ... and new creation ... is meant progress in the degrees of human perfections, the training of human realities, and the shining forth of the light of divine guidance.*[7] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Revelation of St. John informs us that at the time of the appearance of the Promised One everything shall be recreated. Since some of the verses of this heavenly Scripture are allegorical, it is necessary to review the interpretation of a few concepts:

- **Jerusalem** a city that is descended from Heaven. This is a reference to the new world civilization created through the influence of the Bahá'í Faith.
- **A new Heaven** is a reference to a new Religion; and a new Earth is a reference to a new world and transformed hearts.

- **Sea** is a reference to the chaotic and unstable world which, like the waves of the sea, is in motion.
- **The coming of God** is a reference to the Promised One Who is manifested in the name of God.
- **Being the First and the Last** is a reference to the unity of the Manifestations of God. They are all the First and the Last. This is one of the hidden meanings of khátam.
- **The Glory and Splendor of God** is a possible translation of Bahá'u'lláh; inasmuch as Bahá means "Light and Glory".

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband .... He who was seated on the throne (the Promised One) said, "I am making everything new! ... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbeliever ... their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur ... and he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God (Bahá'u'lláh) and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.
>
> Revelation 21:1–12

Renewal of the world has also been prophesied in the Zoroastrian Scriptures:

> In that latter time, Súshiáns (the Promised One) will be manifested. He will perfect the purity and renewal of the world. He will uproot the foundation of evil and harm of the Satan.[8]

The following warning has repeatedly been given in the Qur'án:

> If He [God] wills, He will remove you, O people, and replace you with another people. And God is potent to do this.
>
> Qur'án 4:133

> O people! Ye are in need of God, and God is the All-Possessing, the All-Praised. If it be His Will, God shall remove you and bring forth a new creation.
>
> Qur'án 35:15–16

> Hast thou not seen that, in truth, God hath created the heavens and the earth? If it be His Will, He will remove you and bring forth a new creation. And this is not difficult for God.
>
> Qur'án 14:19–20

It is beneficial to study some of the verses related to "a new creation" and see how they relate to the events of our time. The following verse describes the state of the people of our time:

> They denied the Messengers; therefore, My warnings came true. Are We wearied out with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regards to a new creation!
>
> Qur'án 50:14–15

The "**first creation**" and a "**new creation**" are references to the two stages of human evolution: The stage of childhood (growth and training), and the stage of maturity. We are presently living on the threshold of the second

stage—the seed of a new civilization has been sown, and its wholesome fruits are growing and ripening. In the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad 'Aḥsá'í, these two stages have been called the **fetal** and **birth** stages.

Many Qur'anic verses speak of the doubt, misgiving and hopelessness of the people of our time. What else would you expect if people lose hope that a new Manifestation of God will appear? Muslims have been taught that the final Messenger appeared in Arabia and that God will never again speak to His servants. Hope is what keeps us alive. Could we imagine any glad-tidings more important and more joyous than the news of the coming of new Manifestations?

The following verses are quite instructive, inasmuch as they explain the meaning of the "Seal of the Prophets", and, at the same time, refer to the appearance of a new ummah:

> [99] Do they not see that God Who created the heavens and the earth is able to create a people like them [**a new people**]? For them [Muslims] a fixed time is decreed; in this there is no doubt. The unjust deny this only in unbelief. [100] Say: If ye had possessed the treasures of the bounty and mercy of my Lord, fearing poverty, ye would not have spent them. How stingy is man!Qur'án 17:99–100

The above verses clearly state that after the Muslims—who are called the middle ummah—another ummah will appear. These verses, with perfect clarity, confirm other verses of the Qur'án, such as "**For each ummah a limited time is decreed**", and they show that the era of the Muslim ummah will, at a preordained time, end. The Creator asks us to have no doubts concerning this truth. The second verse reminds us of our lack of generosity; if we were not stingy, no trace of poverty would remain on earth. Lack of generosity can also clearly be seen in the domain of faith and belief; inasmuch as the followers of each of the former religions refuse to accept any future religions. They imagine that God's treasury of mercy and bounty can be emptied, and after their own Manifestation no other Manifestations would step into the world of being. This is a common baseless assumption; in Islám it has reached its greatest impact, such that according to Qur'anic prophecy it has prevented Muslims from seeing the limitless treasures and gems that, in this age, God has bestowed on them and on other people.

The following verses not only give the glad-tidings of the appearance of a new ummah, but also mention the title of the new Promised One of God:

> [104] The Day when We shall roll up the heaven like a rolled-up written scroll. Just as We began the first creation, We shall repeat it [create a new creation], a Promise upon Us, and We shall surely fulfill it. [105] And verily We wrote in the Psalms that after [the appearance of] the Remembrance [Dhikr], My righteous servants will inherit the earth. [106] In this [verse] there is an announcement for the people who worship God. Qur'án 21:104–106

The Promise in the Psalms is in the following verse:

> Who then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the

> land. The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. Psalms 25:12–14

As we discussed in chapter 22, by heaven is meant the religion of God. With the appearance of the Remembrance (Dhikr)—the Báb—a new era has begun in the history of humanity. The previous religions have been rolled up, i.e. their dispensation has ended, and a new heaven, meaning a new religion, has appeared. The righteous servants of God are the inheritors of the earth. The "earth" is also renewed; the "earth" being a reference to the bounties of God, for example, "a new heart" or a new spirit bestowed on the followers of the new religion of God.

According to verses 21:105–6, only those believers who truly worship God will comprehend the meaning of this joyous news:

The following verses also refer to the Dhikr ("Remembrance"):

> Those (the two Promised Ones of our era) are the ones to whom We gave the Book, authority, and Prophethood. If they [a group of people] deny it [their Religion], then We entrust it to **[another] people** who will not deny it [their Religion]. God hath guided them [the believing people]; follow them then [benefit from their guidance]. Say: I ask for no reward. He is the Remembrance (Dhikr) for the people of the world. Qur'án 6:89–90

Who else but the Messengers are given **a heavenly Book, authority, and the station of Prophethood**? These verses, like the previous ones, link the appointment of **a new people** after the two Promised Ones of our era are denied by the previous people.

The following verse also clearly announces the appearance of a new people in the future:

> O believers! If any from among you turneth back from his Religion, soon **God shall manifest a people whom He loveth and He is their Beloved** (they love Him).... [a people who] strive in the Way of God and fear not the blame of any blamer. This [degree of faith] is by the grace of God. He bestoweth it on whom He will. Qur'án 5:54

"If anyone among you turns away from his Religion", refers to a Muslim who does not believe in the Promise of God. A true Muslim is he who has faith in the Qur'án and its Promises. Those who turn away from God's Promised One have turned away from their religion, and in the sight of God are no longer considered to be Muslims.

The foundation of God's plan and methods are that at the time of the Manifestation of every Messenger, His followers become "successors" to the followers of the former religion. In this way, every ummah is a "middle ummah". The following verse refers to Muslims as the "successors" to previous ummahs, then speaks of denial:

> He it is Who placed you as successors [to the former ummahs]. Then whoever refuses to believe, then upon him is his disbelief [it is to his loss] .... Qur'án 35:39

It is clear that Muslims are not the deniers of their own Messenger. Then who else but the next Promised One can they deny?

The following verse relates the promise of a "**new creation**" to the promise of "**Meeting God**", which is a reference to the appearance of the Promised One:

> They said [mockingly]: What! After we die, we are then recreated? Truly they deny [the Promise of] Meeting with their Lord. Qur'án 32:10

The following verse also testifies to the denial of the Lord and the appearance of a "new creation":

> The parable of those that deny [Meeting] their Lord, their works are as ashes which, on a stormy day, are blown away .... Have ye not seen that God in truth created the heavens and the earth, and should He desire He will remove you and bring [in your place] a new creation? Qur'án 14:18–19

What can be expected from those who do not expect the coming of a Messenger, except the denial of the Promised One? According to the above verses and others, the previous good work of those who deny their Promised One blows away and vanishes.

The following verses also relate the appearance of a new creation to the Presence of God. In addition, they warn the deniers of this **Great Day**, that God is the omnipotent Avenger. Then they remind Muslims that only those who are endowed with understanding take counsel.

> Think not that God will forsake His Promise to the Messengers. God is the Almighty, the Lord of Retribution. On the Day when the earth and heavens shall be changed into another; and they appear before the One true God, the All-Subduing .... This is a **Message for the people** to be warned by it, and know that only He is One God, and that those endued with understanding may take counsel. Qur'án 14:47–48, 52

The changing of the world has also been confirmed in the Bahá'í Faith:

> *This Day a different Sun hath arisen, and a different Heaven hath been adorned with its stars and its planets. The world is another world, and the Cause another Cause.*[9] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following verses, we also find a reminder and a warning:

> We created them .... And whenever We desire, We shall replace them with another people. **This is a reminder**. Whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord .... God will have mercy on whomever He willeth, and for the oppressors [the deniers of the Promised One], He hath prepared a painful torment. Qur'án 76:28–31

Careful reflection on the above verses will reveal their secrets to us:

- Why is it said: **"This is a reminder"**? A reminder is necessary when there is heedlessness. What kind of heedlessness is more important than neglecting to recognize the Promised One of God?
- Why is it said: **"Whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord"**? This statement proves that people have a choice to accept or deny the new Promised One of God.

The following verses describe the overall Plan of God in sending Messengers whose followers become a "new creation". They then give us the news of the appearance of the Promised One of our age. Outwardly the verses refer to the Day of Resurrection. However, the Day of Resurrection and the "new creation" are repeated over the ages. The creation of a new people, begins with a spark of faith in accepting the new Messenger. It is a bestowal of spiritual life; it is not about the material life:

> If ye deny [the Message]—as the nations before you have denied—the duty of the Messenger is only to clearly convey [the Message]. Have they not seen how God began the creation, and then recreated it? That is indeed easy for God. Say! Travel through the earth and observe how He originated the creation. And then God bringeth forth another creation. Truly God hath power over all things .... Ye cannot—whether on the earth or in the heaven—withstand Him, and ye have no friend nor helper save God. As to those who believe not in the signs of God, and that they shall ever meet Him, these of My mercy shall despair, and for them doth a grievous chastisement await. Qur'án 29:18–23

The above verses relate not only to the rise and fall of nations but to the spiritual recreation of man. The aim of every religion, in the past or in the future, is to bestow eternal life on people who are facing their "spiritual death". Every religion is sent down from God, and at a predestined time it returns to God. A study of the history of religions demonstrates that the spiritual recreation of humanity has repeatedly started and ended. Ummahs repeatedly grow, mature and decay, and eventually end at a fixed time. Then, a new ummah is established upon whom spiritual life is bestowed through the appearance of a new Messenger.

The above verses, like many others, tell us that the people of the "Last Days" have no hope of "Meeting God". They arise to prevent the spread and victory of the religion of God. However, they do not succeed. Through parables, Jesus teaches His follower the same knowledge as given in the Qur'án:

The parable of the unjust farmers

> Listen to this parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a water tower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants, they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore [Jesus asks His listeners] when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?
>
> "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."
>
> Jesus said to them, "have you never read in the Scriptures:
>
> > 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'
>
> Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."
>
> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was taking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet. Matthew 21:33–46

It is necessary to clarify some points in the story:

- The **owner of the vineyard** refers to God or the Greatest Spirit of God that appears in His Messengers.
- The **vineyard** alludes to the religion of God.
- The **farmers** are the religious leaders who are in charge of the vineyard.
- The **share** refers to the followers of the previous religions. Whenever the Messengers wanted to obtain their **share** from the farmers, i.e. bring the followers of the previous religion into the new Faith, the religious leaders tried to prevent this.
- The **son of the owner** is a reference to Jesus, and the **owner** refers to the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh. Jesus referred to himself as the "Son" and to Bahá'u'lláh—the Most Great Spirit of God—as the "Father":

> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory (Bahá'). Matthew 16:27
>
> Say, Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled! This is the Word which the Son concealed, when to those around Him He said: 'Ye cannot bear it now.'[10] Bahá'u'lláh
>
> Lo, the All-Possessing is come. Earth and heaven, glory and dominion are God's, the Lord of all men ....[11] Bahá'u'lláh

When the Báb was manifested, the religious leaders who denied Him lost their station of being farmers. This honor was then transferred to a new people, i.e. the followers of the new religion of God.

- **the stone the builders rejected** is in one sense a reference to people who do not have a high position or station and are considered of the weak, poor and defenseless. Many such people have accepted the Bahá'í Faith and have become the cornerstone of the divine structure. The Qur'án also confirms this news:

> And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make of them Our heirs.
> Qur'án 28:5 (quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p 146)

According to the law of Justice, God withholds the blessings of the Kingdom from the haughty, demanding and self-promoting leaders, and bestows them on the meek who have been spiritually recreated.

At the beginning of the appearance of Christianity and Islám, those who rejected the new Messenger denigrated the new believers:

> They said: Shall we believe in thee—whom only the basest of people have followed? Qur'án 26:111

> Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Luke 15:1–2

In our era also, some fanatical followers of former religions treated the Bahá'ís with contempt and considered them to be the "unclean and misled sect". They are unaware that they themselves are following in the steps of former generations. One who is forbearing will never look upon another with contempt.

> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5

> Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long .... Good and upright is the Lord .... He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Psalms 25:4–5, 8–9

> The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor ... to Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*
> Isaiah 61:1–2

The story of the vineyard and the farmers demonstrates that the majority of people, of whatever religion, refuse to recognize the new Promised One of God. How amazing it is that the denial of the Faith of God by people is in itself a sign of the truth of that Faith!

The Báb also has a brief parable similar to the one told by Jesus:

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* Jewish and Christian Scriptures mention AH 1260 & 1280 (CE 1844 & 1863) 16 times: the Manifestation of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. See *I Shall Come Again*, ch. 10–18.

You are like unto the man who layeth out an orchard and planteth all kinds of fruit trees therein. When the time is at hand for him, the lord, to come, ye will have taken possession of the orchard in his name, and when he doth come in person, ye will shut him out from it.

Verily We planted the Tree of the Qur'án and provided its Orchard with all kinds of fruit, whereof ye all have been partaking. Then when We came to take over that which We had planted, ye pretended not to know Him Who is the Lord thereof.[12]

The Báb

The following verses show that the creation of a new people relates to a Promise that people reject:

> Your Lord is the All-Sufficing, the Merciful. Should He desire he could remove you and replace you with whomever He will, just as He created you as the offspring of other people. What ye have been promised will be fulfilled and ye cannot prevent its fulfillment. Qur'án 6:133–134

The following verse also makes a Promise:

> God hath promised the righteous believers amongst you that He shall surely make them His inheritors in the land, as He made the former believers inheritors of those before them. And He shall surely cause the Religion He hath chosen for them to be firmly established, and shall change their fears into tranquility and safety. They shall worship Me alone without a partner. Whoever, after this, disbelieves is of the profligate. Qur'án 24:55

The above verse teaches us several points, for example:

- God makes a promise to the righteous believers—a promise related to the future.
- **Making the righteous believers inheritors** is a promise also given in Psalms to the believers, and in other Qur'anic verses it has been confirmed in reference to the Bahá'í Faith.
- Transforming the believers' fears into tranquility and safety is a reference to their rebirth and recreation.

Sura 7 al-A'ráf ("The Heights")

Sura 7 al-A'ráf speaks of a particular ummah that leads people toward justice. Which ummah is this? Let us study this prophecy along with other verses of the sura that relate to the appearance of the Promised One of our era:

> Among those We created is an ummah that guides the people with the Truth, and in this, leads to justice. Qur'án 7:181

Which religious followers are inviting people to recognize the Truth and guide them to the way of justice? One of Bahá'u'lláh's goals is the establishment of justice in the world:

O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.[13]

Bahá'u'lláh

The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.[14]

Bahá'u'lláh

No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it.[15] Bahá'u'lláh

The sun of justice hath risen above the horizon of Bahá'u'lláh. For in His Tablets the foundations of such a justice have been laid as no mind hath, from the beginning of creation, conceived.[16] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—such as the equitable division of wealth, equality of women and men, establishment of Houses of Justice throughout the world—will establish God's government of justice on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Also, in sura 7 is a verse regarding "a creation that guides the people to Truth and Justice":

> Among the followers of Moses, there is a group who guides the people with Truth, and in this way, leads to justice. Qur'án 7:159

This prophecy has also been fulfilled, inasmuch as thousands of followers of Moses have joined the Bahá'í Faith, and in accepting Bahá'u'lláh, they testify to the truth of Jesus and Muḥammad. The acceptance of three religions by a group of people is without precedence. These truth-seeking followers of Moses have played an important part in guiding people, especially Muslims, to the new Faith of God.

After announcing the appearance of an ummah to establish justice in the world, the Qur'án issues a warning to the deniers of the Faith of God:

> Those who deny Our signs and verses, We gradually punish them in a way they do not know. But they are given a respite. Indeed My plan is strong and stable. Qur'án 7:182–3

The above verses show that the spread of the new Faith will be gradual. God will respite the deniers, so that they have a chance to play their part in the fulfillment of the Plan of God. They also have a part to play in fulfillment of God's Promises in the world . After this introduction, the tongue of Revelation alludes to a particular person:

> Do they not reflect? Their Companion is not insane. He is but a clear warner. Qur'án 7:184

- Who is "Companion" of the people?
- Who are those whom people have accused of insanity over the ages?
- Whom does God choose to warn His servants?

Those characteristics apply to the appearance of a Messenger Whom the people do not appreciate, and Whose beautiful names they deny.

What is meant by "Companion" in the above utterance? The Messengers are the Lords of the world; nonetheless they associate with the people with perfect humility, appearing in plain garments and becoming companions of the people. Speaking about His behavior towards the people, Bahá'u'lláh mentions this role:

This, although We have never gloried in any thing, nor did We seek preference over any soul. To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

Muḥammad was also praised by God:

Indeed Thou art of a great moral character. Qur'án 68:4

Indeed for those of you who have hope in (the Promise of) God and the Last Day, and often make mention of God—the Apostle of God is a good example (role model). Qur'án 33:21

After the introduction of the "Companion" in verse 7:184, God asks us to ponder and reflect:

Are they not beholding the kingdom of heavens and earth, and whatever else God hath created? And it may be that the end of their set term [ajal] is indeed near. Then, after it* [alluding to future events] in what utterance [of God] do they believe? Qur'án 7:185

The above verse clearly show that Muslims deny the "set term" for the Muslim ummah, and have no faith in God's words regarding its fate. What "set term" (ajal) or "period of time" is finished, but the believers are reluctant to admit its end? Is this anything other than the "set time" or the time-span that God has bestowed on each ummah? Is it not true that:

For every ummah a set term [ajal] is decreed. Qur'án 7:34

In 7:185 it is asked: "**Are they not beholding the earth and heaven**?" What lesson can perceptive humans draw from God's creation? Every created thing, from a single atom to the galaxies, tells us with its inner tongue : "The world is in constant revolution. Whatever we see has a beginning and an end." **Is there an exception to the law of the beginning and end? Have not former religions been continually renewed? Has not every religion faced a "fixed term" (ajal)?**

Whoso hath not breathed the sweet fragrance of the Beloved at this dawntide is indeed accounted among the dead.[18] Bahá'u'lláh

Whomsoever God alloweth to stray shall have no one to guide him. And He [God] abandons them wandering blindly in their transgression. Qur'án 7:186

The above verse teaches us again that people will be faced with a particular decision. They choose at that time to be guided or to go astray.

Then Qur'án 7:187 speaks of the coming of the **Hour**. Those verses related to this revelation were discussed in chapter 19.

We can also use a ḥadíth to help us understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verses concerning the appearance of a **new creation** or the **changing of one creation to another**. Several 'aḥádíth give us the key. Let us see how Muḥammad interpreted the following verse:

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* A reference to the prophecies of God regarding the events after Muḥammad.

> And if ye turn away, He [God] will replace you with another people who will not be like you. Qur'án 47:38

As we saw in chapter 16, the following is an interpretation of the above verse in Majmau'l-Bayán-i-Ṭabarsí:

> They (the companions) said: O Apostle of God! Who are those whom God hath mentioned in His Book (Qur'án)? Salmán was near the Apostle of God; the Prophet then placed His hand on Salmán's leg, and said: "This man and his people. By the One in Whose hand is my soul! If faith were in the star of Pleiades men of the land of Persia will bring it to earth."*

In His answer to the question about the identity of the people mentioned in Qur'án 47:38 , Muḥammad indicates that:

- The appearance of "**another people**" in the future is a reference to the followers of the new Promised One of God.
- The Promised One of the era—He Who brings the Faith to the people, from the Heaven of divine Revelation—**is from the homeland of Salmán, i.e. of the people of Persia.**

According to another source, Muḥammad states regarding "another people":

> He (Muḥammad) said: They are of the people of Persia, as this man (Salmán) and his people.[19]

Other hadiths also refer to the place of the appearance of the Promised One and His first believers:

> His [the Qá'im's] ministers are from the people of Persia.[20]

> He will favor the children of Persia, with this Religion.[21]

> The companions of the Qá'im are three hundred and thirteen [in number] from the people of Persia.[22]

> When the Imám Mihdí appears, His clear enemies will be the divines of the age ... they (the followers of the Qá'im) will be murdered in Persian cities.[23]

> *The first to turn away from Us have been the world's spiritual leaders in this age—they that call upon Us in the daytime and in the night season ....*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Consider how numerous were those who accounted themselves among the wise and the learned, yet in the Day of God were deprived of the outpourings of heavenly bounties.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

We shall know God through His Words

> Surely he has succeeded who purifies [his heart] and remembers the name of his Lord, and prays [glorifies Him]. Qur'án 87:14–15

> *The hosts of Divine love and affection have turned toward the world of being; any heart that was found to be receptive was conquered and seized.*[26] Bahá'u'lláh

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* Ḥadíth source: www.islamweb.net/hadith/display_hbook.php?bk_no=1851&hid=846&pid=280621

O people! The Promised Day is come! Deprive not yourselves of the outpourings of its grace.[27] Bahá'u'lláh

Think not that the Revelation of God is strictly confined to the expression of earthly knowledge and the annulment of immutable laws among the people. Nay, at the moment of Revelation, all created things were, and continue to be, made the bearer of manifold bounties and capacities.[28] Bahá'u'lláh

God willing, a new creation will be manifested that shall comprehend the purpose of God, exalted be His glory, through His words.[29] Bahá'u'lláh

O FRIEND! ... We directed everyone in this Most Great Revelation to see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears. However when the horizon of the world was illumined with the resplendent light of this Revelation, many people forgot this divine commandment, lost sight of this heavenly exhortation and immersed themselves in the vain imaginings which their minds had devised. Indeed the face of the sun of justice and fairness is hidden behind the clouds of idle fancy which the foolish ones have conceived.[30] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O headless ones! ... From the west of idle fancy turn unto the east of certitude .... Seize your chance, appreciate the value of these days .... Even as the swiftness of lightening your days shall pass away. Strive, then, that perchance ye may attain the light of true unity.[31] Bahá'u'lláh

Whosoever striveth, striveth for himself. Verily God is Free [Self-Sufficient] from the need of the worlds [his creation]. Qur'án 29:6

1 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 61–61 (no. XXVI)
2 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 390. (prov. tr.)
3 Má'edeye-Ásemání, vol. 4, p. 21. (prov. tr.)
4 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 94. (prov. tr.)
5 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, pp. 272–273. (prov. tr.)
6 Zuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 165. (prov. tr.)
7 Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 2, p. 142. (prov. tr.)
8 Zámyád-Yasht, passage 89 – translated from Persian
9 Quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 78–79.
10 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11.
11 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 99.
12 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 135.
13 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 128–129.
14 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 66–67.
15 *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 28–29.
16 Quoted in, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 28.
17 Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 249 (grid 279)
18 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 74 (gr. 5.7)
19 Ad-durrul-Manthúr fi Tafsíril-Ma'thúr, vol. 6, p. 67.
20 Nuqabá'í, Ḥisám, Bishárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, p. 118.
21 Al-Káfí, vol. 1, p. 28.
22 Nuqabá'í, Ḥisám, Bishárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, p. 119.
23 Nuqabá'í, Ḥisám, Bishárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, p. 88.
24 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 254.
25 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 256.
26 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 373. (prov. tr.)
27 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 147. (prov. tr.)

28 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 90–91.
29 Iqtidárát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 95.
30 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 236.
31 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, pp. 156–157. (prov. tr.)

24
The appearance of other Manifestations

From the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end, Prophets have been and will continue to be manifested.[1] The Báb

Many Qur'anic verses have prophecies regarding the appearance of another "Messenger" or other "Messengers". Sometimes it is clear that Muḥammad or former Messengers are intended. Other verses refer to future Messenger(s). How can we separate and comprehend those verses that refer to the future? The only way is to carefully study their meaning and those of accompanying verses. Let us study some examples:

Verses that refer to Muḥammad or former Messengers

O people of the Book! Our Messenger hath come to you that He may make clear to you much of what ye have kept hidden from the Book. Qur'án 5:15

O Messenger! Convey [unto the people] that which hath been revealed unto Thee by Thy Lord. Qur'án 5:67

We should be aware that the phrase "Apostle of God" is a title that applies to every Messenger. For example, Jesus has said:

And when Jesus, the son of Mary said .... Verily I am the Apostle of God. Qur'án 61:6

The following verse is revealed in response to people who exaggerated the station of Jesus:

Jesus, the son of Mary is but an Apostle, before Whom have appeared other Apostles. Qur'án 5:75

Verses that announce the appearance of future Messengers

[2] This is a Book from God, about which there is no doubt; it has been revealed by God, the Lord of all worlds. [3] They say: He hath forged it. Nay, He is the Truth from thy Lord, that He may warn the people for whom no Warner hath come before Thee (Muḥammad), perchance they may be rightly guided. Qur'án 32:2–3

Which **Book** was revealed by God? Who is **"He"** whose truth God testifies, but whom people use various excuses to deny? For example, they say: 'He has fabricated it'! Who "**is the Truth from God**"? Who is **He** Who is coming for a former people for whom no Warner has come?

Verses 32:2–3 clearly inform us of the coming of a Messenger to guide people for whom no messenger has come before. A question arises since the Qur'án states there has never been a people for whom God has not sent a messenger:

Among every people We have indeed raised up a Messenger. Qur'án 16:36

For every people is a Guide. Qur'án 13:7

How can we explain verse 32:3? In the first place, we should know that the intended people are non-Arabs. Islám was primarily for the Arab tribes:

> This is the Book which We have revealed ... to be a Warner to the Mother of cities (Mecca) and its surroundings .... Qur'án 6:92

Before Muḥammad, other Messengers, such as Ṣáliḥ and Húd, had been sent for the Arab tribes. The Qur'án contains details of the stories of these two Messengers. Therefore, the intended people must be non-Arabs and the intended Messenger was not Muḥammad. It is time for a Messenger to another people.

If God has sent a Messenger to every people, then no other people remain that has not had a Messenger. So, how can we explain this Promise?

There is only one "people" to whom no Messenger has yet been sent. That is the "**people of the world**". The Bahá'í Faith was born in Iran, but its message was not for Iranians only. This religion is for all the people of the world. The following utterance explains the Plan of God for our age.

> *The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

The appearance of such a religion in the world is unprecedented. According to God's Promise, the "**Oneness of Humanity**" will, at last, be established through this religion. In our time, the population of Iran is equal to one percent of the world population. If this ratio is maintained the Iranians will constitute only a small portion of the Bahá'í population of the world. By the Will of God, in this age, the people of the world will maintain their national identities, but will gather under one tent, becoming a new nation, the like of which the world has never seen.

Muslims believe the Qur'án is addressed to them, and they also believe no Messenger of God has appeared in Iran for the guidance of Iranians. Therefore, by their belief, Iran meets the condition to be the place of the appearance of a new Messenger.*

As previously mentioned, some hadiths also indicate Iran as the place of the appearance of the Promised One of our era.

In verse 32:3 it is recorded: "He is the Truth from thy Lord". This combination of words or others similar to it, in reference to a third person, has been used many times in the Qur'án, to refer to the Promised One of our era. The following are examples:

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* Bahá'ís believe Zoroaster was a Messenger of God Who appeared in Iran about 2,600 years before Bahá'u'lláh. However, He is not outwardly mentioned in the Qur'án. The majority of Muslims do not accept the truth of His station. Bahá'ís believe the "Companions of Ras" (ar-Ras, Aras or Araxes River) refers to Zoroastrians.

> Those who have received knowledge see that the One Who hath come to Thee from God is the Truth, and guideth the people to the Path of [God], the Almighty, the All-Praised. Qur'án 34:6

- On whom has knowledge been bestowed? Those who have the capacity and merit to recognize the Promised One.
- What kind of knowledge? The knowledge bestowed by God, and not from schooling.
- How do such people see? With inner eyes, their perception.
- Who is He who comes from God? He is the Messenger of God.
- What is the Mission of that Messenger? To guide the people to the Path of God.

God explains in verse 34:6 the general Law related to all people (*those who have received knowledge*), then He addresses each person (*He Who has come to thee from God).*

There are many verses that announce the appearance of other Messengers in the future. For example:

> The unbelievers from the people of the Book [those who deny Islám] and the infidels will not desist[from their denial] until a clear proof comes to them, a Messenger from God, Who reciteth [to them] pure and holy Scriptures—containing weighty Books .... And that is a firm and lasting Religion. Qur'án 98:1–5

Verse 98:1 uses a conditional tense in speaking of clear proof that is still to come through a Messenger, reciting pure and holy Scriptures. This shows that the announcement refers to a time *after* Muḥammad. These verses inform us of the appearance of a Messenger "from God", and a firm and lasting religion, a Messenger Who will bring many holy Books.* This will be a time when all nations, including Jews and Christians, will abandon their denials, and discover the truth of the new religion. This prophecy has now been fulfilled—hundreds of thousands of "people of the Book" and people without any religion, from around the world, have testified to the truth of the Bahá'í Faith.

The following verse also speaks of the coming of a Messenger in the future:

> O ye who believe! Believe in God and His Messenger, and the Book revealed to His Messenger. Qur'án 4:136

The above verse is addressed to the believers. God invites them to believe in Him, His Messenger and the Qur'án. Is it possible for a believer in Islám not to believe in God, His Messenger and the Qur'án? Then what is the meaning of the verse? Clearly, the intent is belief in the new Promised One of God and His heavenly Book. In this verse, Muslims of later times have been invited to believe in the new Messenger of God and His Book. If they do not believe, then they have denied God, inasmuch as the words of this Messenger are the words of God. This warning has also been confirmed in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

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* Bahá'u'lláh's revelation exceeds one hundred volumes.

Be thou assured in thyself that verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.[3] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verse also testifies that the Muslims will be summoned to recognize the new religion:

When the believers are summoned to God and His Messenger—that He may judge between them—they respond: We have heard Thy Summons, and have obeyed. These are the ones with whom it shall be well [they are blest]. Qur'án 24:51

Muslims believe in God and His Messenger: so are they in need of an invitation to believe in God and His Messenger? They have already heard the Divine Call. Why should they say again: "We have heard"? The expression "We have heard and obeyed" only makes sense when the believers are faced with a new invitation.

To what is "**judgement of God among the believers**" referring? This judgement is related to their response to the Call of the Promised One of God. Consider, among hundreds of examples, the following one, in the words of the Báb, about "the judgement of God", concerning the believers and the deniers of this Faith:

O CONCOURSE of the faithful! Verily the object of each and every sign revealed by God in the Scriptures or in the world at large or in the hearts of men is but to make them fully realize that this Remembrance is indeed the True One from God. Verily God is cognizant of all things through the power of eternal Truth. O people of the earth! I swear by your Lord, besides Whom there is none other God! He, verily, hath left no testimony for anyone save the Remembrance and this Book .... 'Verily I am God and there is none other God but Me. Hence worship Me, and for the sake of Him Who is the Most Great Remembrance, offer your prayers, purged from the insinuations of the people, for verily your Lord, the One true God, is none other than the Sovereign Truth. Indeed such as invoke others besides Him are deservedly numbered among the inmates of the fire ....

O people of the earth! Fear God .... Verily, the Remembrance is the Truth from the one true God. Should ye believe in anyone except Him, by the Decree of God, the True One, ye shall be recorded, in the Mother Book as the inmates of the fire. ... The Remembrance is only to state the Truth from God, the Exalted, the Wondrous. He is the Remembrance from God to announce unto you the glad-tidings of the fulfillment of His Promise and warn you of His chastisement, as recorded in the Mother Book .... Verily, God hath made the Remembrance better for you than your own selves that He may recite unto you the verses of God, to purify you, and cause you to step out of the darkness into Light. God is Witness over all things ....

O peoples of the earth! Inflict not upon the Most Great Remembrance what the Umayyads cruelly inflicted upon Ḥusayn in the Holy Land. By the righteousness of God, the True One, He is indeed the Eternal Truth, and unto Him God, verily, is a witness.[4] The Báb

The people waited expectant all their lives for what had been promised by Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. And whenever they heard His name (the Promised One) they rose up and cried out: "May God hasten the joy His coming will bring". And yet, no sooner did He manifest Himself through the power of Truth than they rejected and denounced Him, disputed idly with Him, and imprisoned Him in the

heart of the mountains. Even so, the hatred in their hearts was not quenched ... until they perpetrated against Him that which hath caused the hearts of all created things to be consumed.[*] [5] Bahá'u'lláh

Erelong will ye find your deed recorded by the hand of the Remembrance upon a scroll before God.[6] The Báb

In the Qur'án, people of the future have repeatedly been summoned to accept the new Faith of God. As we have seen before, a Qur'anic verse even mentions the place of the manifestation—the city where Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His Cause:

> And God calleth to the Abode of Peace (Baghdád), and guideth whom He will to the right way. Qur'án 10:25

The following verses also recognize the announcement of a future Caller Whose Call the people find objectionable "sorcery":

> And when they see a sign, they turn away and say: "This is constant sorcery". And they denied and followed their own idle fancies. But every matter hath a settlement. **Indeed warnings hath come to them** of perfect Wisdom but the warnings do not profit [them]. Then turn away from them. It is the Day when the Summoner shall summon to a stern business. Qur'án 54:2–6

The following verses, first testify that the sending of Messengers has always been and will continue to be by the Decree and Method of God; then they allude to the denial of the Remembrance (title of the Báb) by the people:

> [5] By Our Decree: We are ever sending Messengers [sending Messengers has been and continues to be Our Method]. [6] As a sign of the mercy of Thy Lord .... [13] How shall they benefit from [the news concerning] **the Remembrance**?[†] [There is no hope] A Messenger hath come to them with clear proofs. [14] They have turned away from Him, and said: A crazed teacher! Qur'án 44:5–6, 13–14

In the above verses three words clearly explain God's method in sending Messengers: **"Inná kunná mursilín"**. Let us see how translators have translated these three words:

Yúsuf 'Alí:	**We (ever) send (revelations)**
Mawláná Muḥammad 'Alí:	**We are ever sending Messengers**
Muḥammad Taqí ad-Dín al-Hiláli:	**We are ever sending (the Messengers)**

After the above Promise, it is stated:

> (The sending of Messengers) **is a sign of the mercy of thy Lord.** Qur'án 44:6

Can a greater blessing and favor from God to His people be imagined than the sending of Messengers for their guidance? Why should such a great bounty come, suddenly, to an end?

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[*] A reference to the martyrdom of the Báb in Tabríz.

[†] How is possible for the people to accept the Remembrance?

Sura 61 aṣ Ṣaff

The following verses of sura 61 appear to refer to Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. However, some hadiths attributed to Muḥammad testify that the intended Messenger is the Promised One of our time:

> Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths. But God will perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it. He it is Who hath sent His Messenger for the guidance of the people, and to establish His True Faith, that He may gather all Faiths under His shadow, albeit the ungodly abhor it. Qur'án 61:8–9

At the end of sura 61, God announces glad-tidings to the believers:

> Assistance is from God, and time of victory is near. Announce the glad-tidings unto the believers. Qur'án 61:13

The following hadiths confirms the connection between verse 61:13 and the appearance of the Promise One of our time:

> Assistance is from God, and the time of victory is near, meaning with the victory of the Qá'im in the world.[7]
>
> "He it is Who hath sent His Messenger for the guidance of the people and the establishment of true Faith, that He may gather all Faiths under its shadow". This verse hath been revealed about the Qá'im. He is the Imám Who will gather all Faiths under His shadow.[8]
>
> (In the interpretation of) "That He may gather all Faiths under His shadow", He stated: Over all Faiths because of the rise of the Qá'im.[9]

The previous verses from the Sura 61 aṣ Ṣaff explain several matters:

- The appearance of the religion of God and its spread is abhorred by the deniers. However, the plan of God is fulfilled and the "**Light of God**" is spread around the world. This has also been confirmed by many other verses.
- The "**Light of God**" is equal in meaning to "**Bahá'u'lláh**". According to God's Promise, in due time, this Light will overshadow the whole world.

  Erelong God will gather all the people of the world under His shadow.[10] Bahá'u'lláh

- Sura 61 aṣ-Ṣaff was revealed in Madínah. At the time of its revelation, Muslims had been victorious over their enemies, so a promise of victory was not needed.
- Those who deny the Bahá'í Faith in Iran—its birth place—have employed and continue to employ two weapons to extinguish the "**Light of God**". The first weapon is the power of force. However, the murder of over 20,000 of its followers, and the seizure, plunder or destruction of their properties, have not prevented the radiant Light spreading.

  The second weapon used by the enemies of the Bahá'í Faith has been to resort to slander and lies. They have written and propagated many books against this Faith. The extinguishing of the "Light of God" with their "mouths" is a reference to such weapons.

Then they maliciously rose up against Him, Whose light embraceth all created things.[11] Bahá'u'lláh

Verse 61:9 states: "**He it is Who hath sent His Messenger ... that He may gather all Faiths under His shadow**". The Mission of the Bahá'í Faith is the salvation and happiness of all people; it will eventually gather all religions as one Faith of God. All nations will be one. As we saw before, Qur'án 98:1–5 also announces that, in the long run, all nations, such as "the people of the Book and those of no religion", will abandon their denials and profess the truth of the Bahá'í Faith.

A world view and the love of the world have been greatly emphasized in the Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith:

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.[12] Bahá'u'lláh

All must endeavor to better the conditions of the world. The world is but one country .... All must strive with perfect unity and harmony to rehabilitate its fortunes.[13] Bahá'u'lláh

O people of the world! Ye are the drops of one ocean and the leaves of one tree. Forsake dissension and discord, and cleave fast unto harmony and concord.[14] Bahá'u'lláh

O friends! .... Treat all people with utmost love.[15] Bahá'u'lláh

The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.[16] Bahá'u'lláh

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.[18] Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed is he who lieth down and ariseth from his bed intent on the betterment of the world. The best of all deeds is to manifest love towards all the peoples of the world.[19] Bahá'u'lláh

According to the words of the Báb, all religions, including Islám, have, in truth, appeared for the guidance of all the people of the world. They are all equal in this sense. However, the fulfillment of this goal has only become possible in our era. By the end of its term, Islám had gathered nearly one-sixth of the population of the world under its shelter.

Sura 37 aṣ-Ṣáffát

This sura also announces the future appearance of Messengers:

> Some among them said: If we had a Remembrance like those past generations, we would be sincere servants of God. Then (when their Promised One appeared) they denied Him. Soon they will know (the consequences of their actions). Surely Our decree hath been issued regarding Our servants whom We send as Messengers. They shall be aided, and, verily, Our hosts shall conquer. Then, turn away from them (the deniers) until ḥín.* Qur'án 37:167–174

The above verses discuss the following points:

- People say: We are not like past generations. If God sends us a **Dhikr** (**"Remembrance"**), meaning another Messenger, we will believe in Him. However, the people did not change their past habits; they will deny their Promised One as did previous generations.
- The denial of the people fails. The Messengers of God, with God's assistance, will be victorious.

The above verses contain another mystery:

> Then turn away from them until **ḥín**. Qur'án 37:174 & 178

The above repeated verse refers to the Promised One of our time. What mystery is hidden in ***ḥín***? We also saw the same word in verses related to the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh:

> And ye will certainly know of His Announcement **ba'da ḥín**. Qur'án 38:88

What, then, is the meaning of ***ḥín*** in Sura 37 aṣ-Ṣáffát? The verses ask us to turn away from the deniers, be patient and ignore them. Why? Because after the passing of ***ḥín***, meaning the specified "period", the Promised One will appear and God's Promise is fulfilled.

Ḥín has also been used in other Qur'anic verses. In the following verses, the term is used in reference to the gradual unfoldment of God's Plan for the establishment of the "Oneness of Humanity", which is the most important social goal of the Bahá'í Faith:

> This, your ummah is one ummah, and I am your God. Fear Me then. But the people divided their Cause (Amr, "religion") between themselves, and divided into sects. Each sect rejoicing in what was theirs. Leave them, then, in the depths of their ignorance until **ḥín**. Qur'án 23:52–54

Over the course of ages, people have divided the religion of the one true God into many sects. However, God has Promised that the divisions will end. Those seeking to create sects have been given a respite until ***ḥín***. ***Ḥín*** in these verses, delicately, alludes to the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh (in the year 1852) inasmuch as unitl then religious divisions continued; ***ba'da ḥín(after ḥín)*** (Qur'án 38:88; the year 69 or AH 1269/CE 1852–3) After that time (after ***ḥín ba'da ḥín)*** (Qur'án 38:88; the year 69 or AH 1269/CE 1852–3), with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, this period ended with the knowledge of God. The fulfillment of this prophecy is related to the acceptance of the new Faith of God by the generality of humanity.

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* Ḥín (abjad value = 68): time; propitious time, good time, opportunity.

In Sura 37 aṣ-Ṣáffát, there are also other verses regarding these two Messengers of God, the two Promised Ones of our age; for example, the following:

> Nay, He has come with Truth, and the Messengers have been confirmed. Qur'án 37:37

> And peace be upon the Messengers. Qur'án 37:181

There are many similarities contained in the divine Scriptures. As we saw, in the verses of the Sura 37 aṣ-Ṣáffát: Some of them said: **If we had a Remembrance as the previous generation, we would have been sincere servants of God.** Something similar to this point can be found in the Bible:

> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
>
> Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' Matthew 23:27–30

Sura 58 al-Mujádilah

This sura provides a number of signs to recognize the Promised One:

> [19] The Evil One hath overcome them and caused them to forget **the Remembrance of God**. They are **the party of the Satan*** .... [21] God hath decreed "I and My Messengers shall prevail" .... [22] Those [who believe in God and the Last Day] are the party of God. No doubt! Verily, **the party of God** they are the successful. Qur'án 58:19, 21–22

The above verses speak of those people who are at war with God. Such people have always existed and continue to exist. Only with a careful study of these verses can we discover their relationship with the Promised One of the age. There are three signs in these verses:

"The Remembrance of God"—a title of the Báb.
"Messengers"—refers to a number of Messengers.
"the People of God"—a title Bahá'u'lláh bestowed on His followers, and used often in His Writings:

> *O people of God! That which traineth the world is justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.*[20] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men.*[21] Bahá'u'lláh

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* The Báb refers to the enemies of the Religion of God as **"the people of Satan"**.

O people of God! Know ye assuredly: Sedition, strife, murder and pillage befit the beasts of the wild. The station of man and his rank lieth in knowledge and deeds .... O people of God! Associate with all the peoples of the world with love and fellowship.[22]
Bahá'u'lláh

The Pen of the Most High counseleth the people of God towards love and compassion, wisdom and forbearance.[23]
Bahá'u'lláh

In verse 58:21, God testifies that "I and My Messengers shall be victorious". The following verse of Sura 10 Yúnus also confirms this truth:

Do they expect aught but that which occurred in the days of the former generations? Say: Wait then, I will wait with you! Then (at that time), We will deliver Our Messengers and the believers. Thus, it is Our duty to deliver the believers.
Qur'án 10:102–3

These verses explain that:

- To reject, deny and persecute has always been the way of the people; their way has not and will not change.
- To protect and assist the Messengers has been and will continue to be the way of God. Without this protection and support no religion would have taken root and been established in the world.
- In this age, more than one Messenger is manifested.

Sura 36 Yá' Sín: An historic event in the new Revelation

This sura also contains references to the two Promised Onesof our time:

It makes no difference to them, whether thou warnest them or not warn them; they will not believe. In truth, thou warnest only the one who followeth "the Remembrance", and feareth the All-Merciful in the Unseen, .
Qur'án 36:10–11

The above verses explain that only true believers fear God's justice, and are able to recognize His Promised One, "**the Remembrance**". Warning others is fruitless.

Afterwards, God relates a story:

Relate to them the example of the companions of the city to whom Messengers came,
Qur'án 36:13

When We sent to them [the inhabitants of the city] two Messengers, they denied those Messengers; then We strengthened them with a third [Messenger]; they [the Messengers] said: We are God's Messengers unto you; the people said: Ye are but men like us; the All-Merciful God hath not sent anything; ye are liars; they [the Messengers] said: Our Lord knoweth that we are sent to you; our duty is but to clearly inform you.
Qur'án 36:14–17

The above verses inform us of an event. What is that event? Who are these two Messengers, and the third one? The Creator who revealed these verses disclosed this mystery to us through the Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh (one of the Messengers). In the interpretation of "then We strengthen them with the third", He has stated:

> *Know ye that the former One Whom We brought forth by the power of truth hath been 'Alí; We have caused Him to dawn above the horizon of Fárs .... And the second one, We raised up ... through the potency of Our name, the Most Holy* [Quddús] .... *We exalted the two through this Beauty ....*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

In the above utterance, Bahá'u'lláh has interpreted verses 36:13–17 and has named the three people mentioned:

1 'Alí, meaning 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb.
2 The most prominent follower of the Báb, entitled Quddús.
3 Bahá'u'lláh, referred to by the title Jamál-i-Mubárak ("The Blessed Beauty", abbreviated as "Beauty").

Historical records state that Bahá'u'lláh set out for the Shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, in early December 1848, where the followers of the Báb were besieged by government forces, but he was captured and prevented from reaching His destination.

Bahá'u'lláh only interprets verses 36:13–17 of Sura 36 Yá Sín. Let us study further verses of this sura related to the two Promised Ones of our time. These provide signs that are initially in the form of a conversation between the Messengers of God and the deniers of those Messengers.

After the three Messengers of God say: *"Our duty is but to clearly inform you"* (36:17), the deniers answer:

> We consider your presence a bad omen; if ye desist not from your claim, we will stone you, and as a result, ye will suffer a terrible torment. Qur'án 36:18

> They [the Messengers] said: Your bad omen is with you. Is there any harm in reminding? Indeed, ye are a transgressing people. Qur'án 36:19

The conversation between God's Messengers and the deniers ends here. In the meantime, another person arrives to continue the conversation:

> Then a man arrived from the farthest city and said: O my people! Follow these Messengers—those who ask no recompense from you, and are themselves guided aright. Qur'án 36:20–21

Who is this person? The only sign given is that he is coming from **aqṣa al-madịnat** (the "farthest city"), which may be translated as:

- The farthest part of the city
- The farthest city, a faraway city

If we accept the first meaning then the verse is associated with an unknown man from another part of the city who becomes a believer and calls on other people to believe. If we accept the second meaning, then the prophecy is fulfilled by the first believer in the Báb, Mullá Muḥammad-Ḥusayn-i-Bushrú'í, an honored scholar given the title Bábu'l-Báb (the "gate of the Gate"). His home city of Bushrúye was in the state of Khurásán; the home of the Báb was in the city of Shíráz these two places are at the opposite ends of Iran; Bushrúye is in the north east and Shíráz is in the south west of Iran. Along with Quddús and a number of other followers of the Báb, Bábu'l-Báb had to defensively fight,

against large government forces, and, at last, lost his life in the path of the Cause of the Báb. Among the defenders in the fort at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, the most prominent was **Quddús**, and the second most prominent was **Bábu'l-Báb**. The number of the defenders of the Fort was 313, a number prophesied in a ḥadíth.

Therefore, what is common among the four men mentioned is that, directly or indirectly, they all stood up to the army of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were imprisoned at this time and could not be directly involved in this struggle; the two others—Quddús and Bábu'l-Báb—were directly involved in the struggle and, in the end, sacrificed their lives. Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh wrote the following in a letter to his uncle, who was the chief of the army tasked to attack the Bábís:

> O my illustrious uncle! I want you to destroy this misled and misguided sect, in such a way that no trace of it remains, and it is utterly annihilated and vanished from the face of the earth.[25]

A letter from Quddús

The messengers said:

> Our Lord knoweth that we are His messengers. Our duty is only to proclaim the clear message.
> Qur'án 36:16–17

While Quddús and a group of believers—including Bábu'l-Báb—were in the fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, he wrote a letter to the head of the army surrounding the fort. Excerpts from that letter provide proof of the fulfillment of the prophecies contained in the Qur'án regarding those messengers:

> God, the true one, is my witness that these hapless souls have utmost hatred and repugnance for hostility, how much more for contention and conflict .... As enjoined by the Faith, we proclaimed the appearance of the Promised Qá'im to the distinguished divines, who have for a thousand years been expecting His appearance, and uttering: "Haste"; we have conveyed to them His signs and proofs. They, even as the divines of the former times, have clung fast to their vain imaginings and turned away from Him Who is the Object of Knowledge. They, not only deprived themselves, but arose to seduce the masses and deprive them from this absolute grace ....
>
> Without any investigation or inquiry, they have pronounced these people as infidels, and have issued the sentence of death against them; they have despised and denounced these wronged ones as foul and corrupt; they have incited the hapless people to murder these homeless victims of tyranny. They have declared the murder of a group of oppressed people as the cause of nearness to God; they have led the people into error, and have misled his majesty, causing him to order a military expedition for the purpose of shedding the blood of his subjects. They have caused the stain of this shameful act to remain on this royal dynasty.
>
> If the Mujtahids could truly distinguish between truth and falsehood they should have moved to investigate this Cause, in the beginning of its appearance; they should have considered the understanding of this claim the greatest matter and necessity; they should have not rested until they had met the One Who had laid claim to this station; they should have investigated this claim without bias or selfish desires ....

> We have no enmity or hatred towards anyone; we are an oppressed band restrained in this valley; we have suffered great harm and toiled infinitely. Allow us to leave this country and travel to the Holy Shrines; we leave the country to you and to the divines. If we are barred from leaving, and you obstruct us from all directions, if your intention is only to murder these wronged ones, we will have no duty but to defend ourselves, even though in this defense, we are certain to drink the wine of martyrdom. We have, with courage, prepared for this martyrdom ....
>
> These companions who are confined in this desolate fortress have forsaken possession, property and life, having attained the station of certitude in the Cause of the Qá'im ... with great ecstasy, they have broken the chains of attachment to the world, and have held fast to the world of Truth. They are now awaiting the Divine decrees and the storms of calamities.

The story of the 313 followers of the Báb defending themselves against the forces of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh has been recorded, in detail, in *The Dawn-Breakers*. In this struggle, the two great heroes, Quddús and Bábu'l-Báb, and most of the other companions drank the cup of martyrdom.

Sura 23 al-Mu'minún (The Believers)

This sura also announces the coming of "a Messenger" or "Messengers"; it also informs us of the heedlessness of the masses, and gives us a sign:

> We do not burden any soul beyond its ability. With Us is a Book that speaketh the Truth, and doth not wrong them, but of which their hearts are ignorant.
> Qur'án 23:62–63

What responsibility are the people incapable of bearing? The recognition of the Promised One. What Book explains the Truth, but people are unaware of it? The Promised One's Book. How do the people wrong themselves? By rejecting the Promised One.

The following verses also clearly speak of the appearance of the "Messengers" of our era, and how the people treated them:

> [68] Do they not ponder the Word of God? Hath it come to them that which did not come to their forefathers? [69] Do they not recognize their Messenger and so deny Him? [70] Or do they say He is a lunatic? Nay, He brought them the Truth; albeit most of them abhor the Truth. [71] Yet if the truth had followed their vain desires, the earth and heavens and all that is therein would have been corrupted.* Nay, We have given them **their Remembrance**; albeit they turn away from "**their Remembrance**".
> Qur'án 23:68–71

Our Creator wants us to reflect and respond to the following questions:

- Have we thought about the distinction between the Word of God and the word of men? Inasmuch as God's instructions are infinitely superior to those of His creatures.
- Has not the new Faith appeared in the same way as former religions? Through the ages the appearance of Messengers has always occurred in the

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* A reference to people's demand for miracles.

same way. God has never used miracles to compel His servants to accept His Messenger. Outwardly, the Messengers appear much like other people.

- Is our denial of the Promised One because of our inability to recognize Him, since He does not come with convincing proofs?
- Why do people accuse the Promised One of insanity? Through the ages, people have looked for excuses to deny the Promised One. The accusation of insanity has been one of those excuses. In our time, many people use only one sentence to deny their Promised One. For example, they say: "This religion is invented by a foreign power." Such deniers make every effort to obscure the radiant and beautiful Sun with the veil of their vain imagining.
- At the end of these questions, our Creator reminds us of the main reason for the denial of the Promised One:

> Most of them abhor the Truth. Qur'án 23:17

Why do people tend to reject their Promised One? The answer to this question is given, in detail, in chapter 27.

The following verses also describe the conditions of the majority of the people of our time:

> [81] Nay they have uttered things similar to that which their forefathers have uttered .... [85] Say: Will ye not then be warned? .... [87] They will say to God. Say: Wil ye not then fear God? .... [89] They will say to God. Say: How then can ye be so spell-bound? [90] Yea! The Truth hath come to them, but they consider it falsehood. Qur'án 23:81, 85, 87, 89, 90

Verse 23:81 teaches us that the ways of previous generations will continue. This particularly refers to the denial of the Messengers! Religious leaders attribute their own interpretations of scripture to God. Christians say, "God has told us in the Bible that Jesus is the only way to Him". Muslims say "God has called our Messenger the last of the Prophets". In this way, with their false interpretations, they attribute to God whatever they wish.

In verse 23:90 above, God clearly announces the appearance of a new Faith and its rejection by the people:

> Yea! The Truth hath come to them, but they consider it falsehood. Qur'án 23:90

Further on in the sura [23:109-111], God admonishes the deniers for their mockery of the believers in the new Faith and for forgetting their Promised One Whom He refers to as "My Rememberance":

> [109] Indeed there was a group of My servants [who] said: "Our Lord! We believe. Forgive us our sins, and have mercy on us. Thou art, verily unsurpassed in Thy mercy [among those who show mercy]". [110] Ye [deniers] have mocked them [the believers], so much so that ye have forgotten **My Remembrance**, and have continued to ridicule them. [111] Verily, in this Day, I have rewarded them for their fortitude, and they have attained salvation. Qur'án 23:109–111

Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán ("The All-Merciful")

The Kitáb-i-Bayán

This sura, from the beginning to the end, relates to the Promised One of our era. It begins as follows:

> The All-Merciful God, Who hath taught the Qur'án. He created Man [al-Insán] and taught him speech [al-Bayán]. Qur'án 55:1–4

In the above verses two words have been used that require an explanation:

Man (al-insán)

The term **al-Insán** (**"the Man"**) in this verse is not related to the creation of human beings, inasmuch as it refers to the creation of "Man" after the teaching of the Qur'án. A mystery is hidden in this word. Many interpreters of the Qur'án have interpreted **al-Insán** as "**the perfect Man**", meaning the **Messenger of God.*** The ḥadíth "He created Man (Adam) in His image" and the verse, "He hath taught Adam all the names" (2:31), also clarify the meaning of the word "Adam".

The following verse also teaches us the meaning of insán:

> We verily offered the Trust (of God) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they were afraid, and refused to bear it. However, al-Insán (the Man) undertook to bear it. He was the Wronged One, the Unknown. Qur'án 33:72

According to the following, the above promise was fulfilled with the Manifestation of the Báb:

> *GOD had, in truth, proposed Our Mission unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid thereof. However, Man, this 'Alí, Who is none other but the Great Remembrance of God, undertook to bear it. Hence God, the All-Encompassing, hath referred to Him in His Preserved Book as the 'Wronged One', and by reason of His being undistinguished before the eyes of men, He hath, according to the judgement of the Book, been entitled 'the Unknown' ....*[26] The Báb

Muslim scholars have failed to understand the meaning of **ẓalúman jahúlan** ("Wronged One, the Unknown"; in the above quote and verse 33:72), and often say al-Insán ("humankind") "is cruel and ignorant".† According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá', this interpretation is not rational; inasmuch as only the Chosen Ones of God and righteous believers are capable of bearing such a precious and weighty Trust, and not ignorant and spiteful people.

> *In the Qur'ánic verse that speaketh of the Bearer of the most weighty Trust as ẓalúm[greatly unjust] and jahúl [very ignorant], these terms are not the superlatives of the words "unjust" and "ignorant"; rather, their meaning is "wronged" and "unknown", that is to say that the Bearer of the Supreme Trust is*

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* Mawlána Muḥammad 'Alí states "... many commentators interpret *al-insán* as meaning **the perfect man**, i.e. **the Prophet** ..." *The Holy Qur'an*, p. 1044. .

† He (man) has indeed been unjust and ignorant. (tr. by Majíd Fakhrí)

wronged, inasmuch as the people disdainfully deny Him, and His station is unknown, for they fail to appreciate Him.[27] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Trust, which all creation except the Manifestations of God refuse to bear, is the responsibility of proclaiming the Message of God to the people. The degree of the lack of appreciation, heedlessness and enmity of the people is such that no one except the Messengers are capable of accepting this responsibility, i.e. of carrying such a heavy burden. Even the heavens and the earth are incapable of bearing this weighty load. Those people who arise to aid the Manifestations of God also share the burden of this Trust:

Beseech the One true God, exalted be His glory, to raise up, through His consummate power, a new creation that perchance it may bear the Trust of God.[*] [28] Bahá'u'lláh

The utter submission and meekness of the Manifestations of God dissuades the hypocrites from accepting the gift of God. It is God's plan to test these pretenders, and to cause them to disclose their true nature and inner intentions. If it were not so, every pretender and oppressor, because of fear and greed—and not because of love—would accept the gift of God. Belief based on fear or compulsion is never acceptable in the court of God.

Bayán ("speech, utterance")

Another mystery that appears in verse 55:4 is Bayán. In this sura, the teaching of the Bayán **comes after the Revelation of the Qur'án**. It does not make sense to say that, after revealing the Qur'án, God teaches man utterance. Solving this problem has been very difficult for the interpreters of the Qur'án; **but knowledge of the Writings of the Báb provides an easy solution**. The Báb revealed many Books; His primary Book which, like the Qur'án, includes divine laws and teachings, is called the "**Bayán**". Therefore, the meaning of verses 1–4 of the Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán is as follows:

- The All-Merciful God taught the Qur'án (to the Prophet of Islám).
- (Then) He created al-Insán, meaning another Messenger.
- To that Messenger—the Báb—He taught the "**Bayán**".

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[*] The verses of God have multiple meanings. In the following utterance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives us another meaning for insán and ẓalúm and jahúl:

Even though all people are adorned with the robe of being human, but they are unaware of the truth of this station. The universal grace is manifest in human reality, but man is heedless and forgetful of it. This is one of the meanings of the blessed verse: Verily, man is "ẓalúman jahúlan". Muntakhibátí az Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 6, p. 361.

In the following utterance, in great humility, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states His own inability to bear this Trust:

Consider how difficult and trying servitude at the court of the Almighty is. Now this feeble Servant with weak body and little power should desire to bear this great weight, far, far be it .... Muntakhibátí az Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 6, p. 364.

Two great gifts

After the announcement of the manifestation of the Báb and the mention of His heavenly Book, the Bayán, Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán discusses two other topics:

- God's grace and bounty to His servants
- The lack of appreciation and ungratefulness of the people

In the context of this sura, our Creator repeatedly asks us: "Why is it that with the bestowal of such bounty and grace—instead of being grateful—you protest? How can you ignore this incomparable gift?" Imagine that you bestow two great and beautiful palaces on a poor man. Instead of being grateful, the man harms and persecutes you, and even rises up to destroy the two palaces. Next, he imprisons and kills you and your friends. Such has been the conduct of many people towards the two Manifestations of God in our era.

Thirty-one of the 78 verses in this sura consist of God asking the following question:

> Which of the bounties of your Lord do ye [two groups] deny? Qur'án 55:13

Rabbikumá means "the Lord of you **two groups**". This term is a reference to the appearance of God—**Rabb**—through the two Promised Ones who have been manifested to establish two religions. Although the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are two independent Manifestations who established two independent religions, their aim is the establishment of one religion. Therefore, because of the interdependence of these two Manifestations, we can say that the acceptance or denial of the Bahá'í Faith is equal to the acceptance or denial of two religions or two great gifts of God.

The above verse also applies to two groups of deniers—Muslims and Bábís; inasmuch as some Bábís, just like many Muslims, did not accept Bahá'u'lláh.

Many mysteries are hidden and manifest in the Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán. For example, in addition to sending two Manifestations, God has created two forms of many things:

Two worlds	Two springs
Two seas (salty and sweet)	Two kinds of various fruits
Two Easts	Two punishments in Hell
Two Wests	Two Heavens

Two kinds of creatures: Insán and jinn

The following two verses of the Sura 51 adh-Dháríyát state the dual nature of the plan of creation and then remind us of the need to recognize the Dhikr ("Remembrance"):

> And of all things We have created pairs, that perchance ye may be informed ... then remind (them); for (the recognition of) **the Remembrance** is of benefit to those who truly believe. Qur'án 51:49, 55

In the Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán the people are divided into two groups: **insán and jinn**. To understand these terms, especially the mysterious jinn, which have always puzzled men and been an object of curiosity, it is necessary to know that everything was created by God, including our freedom to choose. Each one of us is free to join one of these two groups—jinn or Insán. As previously discussed in chapter 12, jinn has various meanings; most of the time jinn are believed to be people who are inclined to live in secret, and especially, to conceal their beliefs.

Why is such an attribute and behavior—living in secret—of such importance that God has divided us into two groups? The foremost sign of our being a human is our honesty and truthfulness. People who conceal their character have to continually strive to keep their thoughts and desires hidden from others. If they are faced with a danger or difficulty, then they will conceal the truth and be hypocrites in order to protect their self-interest.

Another characteristic of the people who conceal their true nature, is their fear and extreme caution. If truthfulness is the foundation of human virtue, then courage is the foremost measure of honor and our crown of glory. Courageous people even place their lives in danger for the safety and happiness of others.

What characterizes the people who join and strive to propagate the religion of God at the beginning of the appearance of a new Messenger? Could any religion have been established if it were not for the courage of devoted believers? What kind of people have always stood up to injustice? Would there be any sign of justice in the world if it were not for courageous people? Of what benefit have fearful and cautious people been to the world? How else but through blind imitation have such people chosen their destiny? The imitators have always been a burden to the world of humanity.

In the Bahá'í history the most famous concealer was Mírzá Yaḥyá, known as Azal. He always hid from danger, and concealed his thoughts behind a veil of hypocrisy. Fear and running from truth prevents one from entering the eternal paradise. By the testimony of Christ:

> He who overcomes (over his self) will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving ... their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur .... Revelation 21:7–8

To frighten people from investigating and gaining knowledge of the thoughts and beliefs of enlightened people is the work of Satan:

> Indeed it is the Satan that maketh ye fear his friends. Fear them not. Qur'án 3:175

Faithless divines and those who attack the Faith of God in their inflammatory writings, have always warned their friends and supporters against associating with the followers of new religions of God, even declaring conversations with them as being dangerous.

In this age, even "**caution**" in accepting and promoting the Truth is considered a great sin.

> *Hesitancy is regarded, in this Day, as among the greatest of sins.*[29] Bahá'u'lláh

How great the number of people who have received the joyful tidings of the "**Greatest Announcement**" in human history. However, they refuse to investigate due to a fear of the consequences of accepting the new Faith of God. Such people deprive themselves of the eternal bounties of God. The distinction between courageous and truthful people and those who are cautious, fearful and hypocritical is so great that God only bestows the name insán ("human") on the first group.

A prominent Shaykhí, Mírzá Muḥíṭ-i-Kirmání, who denied the Báb, wished to be admitted to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He sent his request via an intermediary, Prince Kayván Mírzá, and said he wished to arrive in secret and in the middle of the night, lest anyone became aware of the meeting. Bahá'u'lláh responded with two lines from a poem He had composed while in Kurdistán:

> *"If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court, but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire come and let others come with thee. For such is the way of Faith, if in thy heart thou seekest reunion with Bahá; shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us? Be gone!"*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's unequivocal answer disconcerted Mírzá Muḥíṭ; unable to resist yet unwilling to comply, he departed to his home in Karbilá, the very day he received that message. As soon as he arrived, he fell ill and, after a few days, he died.

Let us continue to examine the "pairing" of creatures in other verses of the Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán . All people are initially treated as being equal. However, their response to the news of the appearance of the Promised One separates them into two categories: the believers and the deniers. What is the fate of the deniers in the eternal world? Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán allegorically states they face "**two torments**":

> This is the Hell which the sinners deny. (These sinners) wander about between (two torments) the "Hellfire" and the "Boiling Water". Qur'án 55:43–44

As a contrast to the fate of the deniers, the destiny of the believers is a life in "two Paradises":

> But for him who feareth standing before God, his Lord, two gardens of Paradise is destined.* Qur'án 55:46

Two seas: salty and sweet

The following verses explain with great beauty and elegance the connection between the Faiths of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

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* The meaning of "fear of God" is not that one must live with fear; it means being aware of God's power and justice, and knowing that in the end we must face the consequences of our actions.

> He hath released two seas that they flow freely—two seas that are connected.* Between them a barrier. Which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny? Pearls and corals pour out of them (the two seas). Qur'án 55:19–22 (tr. 1)

> He hath flowed two seas that they may interconnect. Between them a barrier (to preserve their independence). Which one of the favors of your Lord do ye deny? Out of the two seas pearls and corals pour out. Qur'án 55:19–22 (tr. 2)

The following verse of Sura 25 al-Furqán also refers to two seas:

> He it is Who hath released the two Seas: One with sweet Water, the other salty and bitter; and between them He hath placed a barrier, a firm barrier.
>
> Qur'án 25:53

What is the meaning of "Sea"? The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are two independent Messengers; but from the start, their purpose has been to establish one religion. The two main Books of these two Messengers—the Kitáb-i-Bayán and the Kitáb-i-Aqdas—have been likened to two seas from which have poured precious gems on the shore of existence. However, each of these Seas has had its own particular role to play. Some of the laws of the Faith of the Báb are harsh, meaning they are hard to follow; to the taste of many people these laws are "salty and bitter". However, this saltiness and bitterness has a special purpose. The aim of the laws of the "Bayán" was to cleanse the people from the dust of outworn beliefs and vain imaginings, and to prepare them for the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Sura 55 ar-Raḥmán not only mentions the taste of the laws of the "Bayán", it also announced this same Book:

> [1] The All-Merciful [2] taught the Qur'án. [3] He created "al-Insán" (the Man) [4] He taught Him the "Bayán". Qur'án 55:1–4

Sweetness and saltiness are both necessary for our health, but each has a separate effect. In addition, God's bounties can be found in both sweet and salty seas. (Qur'án 35:12)

In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi explains that in the Bayán there are laws that are deliberately harsh; he then explains that the reason for this harshness is the destruction of the outworn, ancient establishments, the awakening of the religious leaders and the transformation of the hearts of the people, preparing them for the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. He further explains that the laws of the Bayán, not only abrogated some of the previous religious laws, they also became a line of separation and a bridge between an obsolete system and the new Bahá'í order.

> Designedly severe in the rules and regulations it imposed, revolutionizing in the principles it instilled, calculated to awaken from their age-long torpor the clergy and the people, and to administer a sudden and fatal blow to obsolete and corrupt

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* Translation by Mawláná Muḥammad 'Alí: He has made the two seas to flow freely—they meet.
The words of God have many meanings. In a letter 'Abdu'l-Bahá compared the marital relationship between a man and a women to these two seas.

institutions, it proclaimed, through its drastic provisions, the advent of the anticipated Day, the Day when "the Summoner shall summon to a stern business," when He will "demolish whatever hath been before Him, even as the Apostle of God demolished the ways of those that preceded Him."[31]

The word "Sea", with various meanings, has frequently been used in the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh. In one He refers to His Cause as "the Most Great Ocean". Expressions such as the ocean of forgiveness, the ocean of knowledge, the sea of divine wealth, the pearls of the ocean of unity, the ocean of utterance, and many others have been used in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.[32] Bahá'u'lláh

The Most Great Ocean hath surged in His Being, through His name, the Most Great, the Most Sublime.[33] Bahá'u'lláh

... and invited them to turn towards this Ocean, every drop of the waters of which crieth out, proclaiming unto all that are in heaven and on earth that He is, in truth, the Fountain of all life, and the Quickener of the entire creation ....[34] Bahá'u'lláh

... grant that Thy servants may not be kept back from this Divine Law which, at Thy will and according to Thy pleasure, hath branched out from Thy most great Ocean.[35] Bahá'u'lláh

Vouchsafe Thy strength, O Almighty One, unto Thy weak creatures, and quicken them who are as dead, that haply they may find Thee, and may be led unto the ocean of Thy guidance ....[36] Bahá'u'lláh

The Ocean of Utterance is manifested with the waves of proofs and the grace of the Desire of the world. Every wave is uttering His praise ....[37] Bahá'u'lláh

By reason of a droplet ye have deprived yourselves of the ocean of heavenly verses ....[38] Bahá'u'lláh

The Ocean of utterance exclaimeth and saith: 'O ye dwellers on the earth! Behold My billowing waters and the pearls of wisdom and utterance which I have poured forth.[39] Bahá'u'lláh

The drops sprinkled from the Most Great Ocean are the cause of the appearance of arts and wonders in the world.[40] Bahá'u'lláh

It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom.[41] Bahá'u'lláh

The vivifying River is flowing, the Ocean is surging, and the Sun is radiant; but seekers are few and rare. This is how it ought to be. For the one lacking in insight is unworthy of beholding the pearls of inner meanings, and the heedless ones are undeserving of receiving the rare and precious gems.[42] Bahá'u'lláh

The word "Sea" or "Ocean" has also been used in the Writings of the Báb:

Hearken unto My call ... from this All-Encompassing Ocean ....[43] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis testified that the pearls of Divine wisdom and heavenly mysteries were also poured into the physical sea by the way of the Tigris River:

... by the express order of Bahá'u'lláh, hundreds of thousands of verses, mostly written by His own hand, were obliterated and cast into the river.* [44]

In reference to His Book, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh sometimes used the word "sweet".[45] In the following utterance He states:

> *Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled .... God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber.*[46] Bahá'u'lláh

Also in the Torah and the Bible there is a reference to a sweet scroll. The Prophet Ezekiel, in a dream, attains the presence of someone like "**Bahá'u'lláh**".† In the midst of this dream, an angel asks him to eat a scroll:

> And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you ...." So I opened my mouth and he gave me the scroll to eat .... So I ate it, and it tasted as **sweet as honey in my mouth** .... Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rushing sound—May the **Glory of the Lord (Bahá'u'lláh)** be praised ...! Ezekiel 3:1–3, 12
>
> Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lieth open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land".
>
> So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet a honey in my mouth ....‡

Sura 77 al-Mursalát

This sura also announces the appearance of two Messengers of God:

> By the Messengers, those sent one after another (the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh). Qur'án 77:1
>
> By the Revealers of the Message (the two Promised Ones). Qur'án 77:5
>
> Surely that which ye are promised will come to pass. Qur'án 77:7
>
> When the time of the appearance of the Messengers is come. Qur'án 77:11
>
> For what Day is (their coming) appointed? Qur'án 77:12
>
> For the Day of Severing (separation of the believers from the deniers). Qur'án 77:13
>
> What is your understanding of the Day of Severing? Qur'án 77:14
>
> On that Day, woe unto the deniers of the Truth!§ Qur'án 77:15

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* When the amanuensis was surprised and reluctant to abide by His order, Bahá'u'lláh told him: "At this time, none is worthy of hearing these melodies."

† This was the appearance of the likeness of the ***Glory of the Lord*** (Bahá'u'lláh). When I saw it, I fell facedown .... Ezekiel 1:28–29

‡ For further study of these verse refer to the book, *Lord of Lords*, chapter 18.

§ This verse is repeated ten times in this short 50 verse sura.

After this utterance, in what saying will they believe? Qur'án 77:50 (tr. 1)

In what utterance [concerning the events] after Him [the Prophet Muḥammad] will they believe? Qur'án 77:50 (tr. 2)

Sura 10 Yúnus

Verses 10:41–70 contain prophecies about the events of our era, and the words and actions of the people of our time. The following is a brief review of these verses:

- The people are free to deny the Truth (Qur'án 10:41).
- A group of them do not have hearing ears. Can such people hear the Word of God? (Qur'án 10:42) A group has no seeing eyes and has no desire to see. Can such people be led to the right path? (Qur'án 10:43)
- God does not treat anyone unjustly; the people do injustice to themselves. (Qur'án 10:44)
- Those who deny the promise of "Meeting God" are of the lost. (Qur'án 10:45)
- For every people a Messenger is sent. (Qur'án 10:47)
- People ask when will this "**Promise**" be fulfilled? (Qur'án 10:48)
- Say: The fulfillment of this matter is not in my (the Prophet's) hands; but know that for each ummah there is a decreed ajal ("term"), whose time cannot be hastened or delayed. (Qur'án 10:49)
- You wished to hasten the fulfillment of the "**Promise**". Now that its appointed time is come, are you prepared to believe? (Qur'án 10:51)
- The deniers of the Truth are unjust to themselves; this self-inflicted injustice will cause them eternal suffering. Do these people expect not to suffer the consequences of their deeds? (Qur'án 10:52)
- The people ask: Is God's promise true? By God! The Promise is true, and you will not be able to prevent its fulfillment. (Qur'án 10:53)
- Every spirit that commits (this) sin (denies this Promise), when he experiences the eternal torment because of this denial, will he be willing to give up all the wealth of the world to be free from this torment. At that time, God decrees with justice, and is not unjust to anyone. (Qur'án 10:54)
- Know of a certainty that "**God's Promise**" is true; albeit most people are heedless of the Truth. (Qur'án 10:55)
- Life and death of all is in God's hands, and all shall return unto Him. (Qur'án 10:56)
- In the Day of the rising of the Promised One, those who calumniate against God (consider the Promised One a liar), what do they think? God's grace and mercy towards the people are boundless, but most of the people are ungrateful. (Qur'án 10:60)
- In the eternal world, there shall be no fear or sorrow for the friends of God. Those who believe (in the Promised One), and eschew evil will be safe. (Qur'án 10:62–63)
- "Glad-tidings" are awaiting the believers, in this world and in the next. Be assured of God's Promise. The attainment to this state—the recognition of the Promised One—is the cause of great salvation. (Qur'án 10:64)

Since the theme of this chapter is the appearance of a Messenger or Messengers, let us conclude with some of the verses discussed in previous chapters. Here, for example, are two verses from Sura 7 al-A'ráf:

> For every ummah a term hath been fixed; when their term is reached (their life is ended), they cannot hasten or delay it even by one hour. O children of Adam! **Surely Messengers will come to you from among you**, who will recite to you My verses. Those who are pious and peaceful shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who deny Our verses and signs, and turn away disdainfully, they shall be the companions of the Fire, where they shall eternally abide. Who can be more unjust than one who hath devised a lie against God, or hath rejected His signs? Qur'án 7:34–37

The above verses announce the appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad. These "Messengers" can refer to all future Messengers, or to the two Messengers of our era, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; either of these two meanings are acceptable. The appearance of the two contemporary Messengers in our time has fulfilled this prophecy.

Ṭáhirih, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the first woman who believed in the Báb, has written regarding the deniers of the Báb:

> They have made light of the glorious Cause that the mighty Lord hath raised up, and vainly imagined that God and His unchangeable method are what is apparent unto them. They have not in all sincerity examined the perversions of this corrupt conviction which is a great error. The Hands of God are not tied up .... How feeble, how ignorant and miserable are we, how foolish and cruel to our own selves to consider the hands of the Imám, peace be upon Him, which are the Hands of God Himself, to be tied up. Far be it from His glory! He is the All-Pervasive. He doeth what He willeth .... They have followed their corrupt inclinations, and have not entered the Gate of God and fallen prostrate, that they may be of those who attain salvation. Alas, alas for those who, with their own hands have committed their souls to destruction, and inflicted upon themselves the most great desolation, yet comprehend it not. Such is the turmoil through which He misleadeth those whom He willeth, and guideth those whom He desireth. He is, in truth, the Mighty, the Wise.[47]

> O ye who are drunk with pride! Ye must enter the Gate of this Realm, which is the realm of the heart, through the proof of wisdom, not through contention and disputation, nor with souls afflicted with denial and repudiation .... Even if ye witness all the signs and proofs, ye will not believe, for when they are presented to you, you contend. This is the Realm of earnest striving, not the arena of contention; this is the station of belief in the Unseen, not in the seen. This is the object of the verse " Thou truly canst not guide whom thou desirest".[48]

We shall know God through His Words

> *The Day calleth; the Sun announceth, and the Moon heraldeth the joyful Tidings: O friends! The All-Knowing God hath come. Bear ye witness. The hidden Light is manifest. Haste ye with heart and soul ....*
>
> *O My servants! Debar not yourselves from the Ocean of Knowledge, and deprive not youselves from the Sun of vision. The exhilirating breezes have wafted, bestowing freshness upon the dispirited. Words cannot describe the blessings of this glorious Day, and every attempt falleth short. Happy is the servant who recognizeth the*

value of this Day, and testifieth to its greatness. We beseech the Peerless Friend not to deprive His servants of the Ocean of His bounty, or turn them away from the Sun of Truth.[49] Bahá'u'lláh

The world-conquering Light of the Sun hath illumined the earth and hath revived this withered world. Well is it with the eye that perceived and recognized. Beseech the All-Sufficing God to disclose the mysteries of this Day, and revive thee with a fresh life. He is the Almighty and the All-informed.[50] Bahá'u'lláh

Well is it with him that hath reflected upon whatsoever he hath heard, and discovered the Truth that lieth therein.[51] Bahá'u'lláh

Cast the idle tales behind your backs and behold My Revelation through Mine eyes. Unto this have ye been exhorted in heavenly Books and Scriptures, in the Scrolls and Tablets.[52] Bahá'u'lláh

And whoso maketh efforts for Us, in Our ways shall We assuredly guide them. God is, verily, with the righteous. Qur'án 29:69

1 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 185. (prov. tr.)
2 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 89.
3 *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 212.
4 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', pp. 56–58—part of this quotation is from, Selections the Writings of the Báb, p. 69, the rest is provisionally translated.
5 Ayyám-i-Tis'ah, p. 281. (prov. tr.)
6 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', p. 119. (prov. tr.)
7 Ḥisám Nuqabá'í, Bisḥárát-i-Kutub-i-Ásmání, p. 116.
8 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 13, pp. 15 and 187.
9 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 13, p. 17.
10 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 294. (prov. tr.)
11 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 296. (prov. tr.)
12 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 288 (no CXXXII)
13 Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id-i-Bahá'ían, p. 29. (prov. tr.)
14 Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id-i-Bahá'ían, p. 30. (prov. tr.)
15 Uṣúl-i-'Aqá'id-i-Bahá'ían, p. 57. (prov. tr.)
16 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 218 (no CXII)
17 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 250 (no CXVII)
18 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 87.
19 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 112. (prov. tr.)
20 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 27.
21 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 93–94 (no XLIII)
22 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 14–15. (prov. tr.)
23 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 139. (prov. tr.)
24 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 88. (prov. tr.)
25 Aqdáḥu'l-faláḥ, p. 148.
26 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 70.
27 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 2, p. 50. (prov. tr.)
28 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 295. (prov. tr.)
29 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 229. (prov. tr.)
30 *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 137–138.
31 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 25.
32 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 85 (gr. 182)

33 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 172. (prov. tr.)
34 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 104 (no. LXV)
35 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 27 (no. XXIV)
36 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 252 (no. CLX)
37 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, pp. 262–263. (prov. tr.)
38 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 76.
39 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 78.
40 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, Andalíb, p. 17. (prov. tr.)
41 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 173.
42 Áyát-i-Bayyinát, p. 227. (prov. tr.)
43 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', p. (prov. tr.)
44 *God Passed By*, p. 138.
45 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 298 (no CXXXVII)
46 *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 39 (gr. 53–54)
47 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 484–485. (prov. tr.)
48 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, pp. 490–491. (prov. tr.)
49 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
50 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 287. (prov. tr.)
51 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 370. (prov. tr.)
52 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 242.

25
The remembrance of God

I swear by your true Lord, by Him Who is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth, that the divine Promise concerning His Remembrance is naught but the sovereign truth and, as decreed in the Mother Book, it shall come to pass ....[1] The Báb

Dhikr ("Remembrance") has been used in the Qur'án to convey different meanings, among them:

- The Messenger of God, the One Who reminds the people
- The Qur'án or the Word of God
- To remember God, to worship
- To remind
- The Promised One of our time

Interpreters and translators of the Qur'án accept the first four meanings of this word, but they have rejected as impossible the fifth meaning; inasmuch as they were not expecting, and do not expect, any Messengers after Muḥammad.

Dhikr meaning "the Messenger of God"

No new Messenger [*Dhikr*] cometh to them from the All-Merciful God, save that they turn away from Him. Qur'án 26:5

We have not destroyed a people unless it had warners [as] a remembrance.* Qur'án 26:208–209

We revealed unto you a Book in which is [mentioned] your Messenger [announces the coming of your Messenger]. Will ye then not understand? Qur'án 21:10

... Fear ye God, O ye endued with understanding! O ye who have believed! Verily, God hath sent you a Messenger [*Dhikr*], who reciteth unto you the enlightening verses of God, that shall lead those who believe and do righteous deeds, out of darkness into Light. Whosoever believeth in God and is righteous, He [God] will admit him [the believer] into the Garden beneath which flow rivers to abide therein eternally. Indeed God bestoweth unto him the best sustenance. Qur'án 65:10–11

The next verse is about Noah:

Are ye astonished that a reminder [*Dhikr*] hath come to you from your Lord through a man from among you that He may warn you to be God-fearing, that perchance, you may receive God's mercy? Qur'án 7:63

Dhikr meaning "a Heavenly Book"

Surely, We, Ourself, have revealed to Thee the reminder [*Dhikr*—the Qur'án], and surely, We are its protector. Qur'án 15:9

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* Translation by Muḥammad Asad:
We did not destroy a community unless it had its warner by way of a Redeemer.

They say: "O thou to whom the Book [*Dhikr*—the Message] hath been revealed! Surely thou art a madman. Qur'án 15:6

[The deniers say] Is the Message [Dhikr] revealed [only] to him from amongst us? Nay, he is an insolent liar. Qur'án 54:25

Dhikr meaning "Warning (Reminder, Advice)"

We verily gave Moses and Aron the Criterion [*al-Furqán**] a Light and a Reminder [*Dhikr*] for the God-fearing. Qur'án 21:48

And this is a blessed Reminder which We have revealed. Will ye, then, deny it? Qur'án 21:50

Dhikr meaning "Worship (Mention)"

Recite Thou what hath been revealed unto Thee of the Book .... And surely the remembrance [*dhikr*] of God is the greatest [of all things]. Qur'án 29:45

Name of our Promised One: The Remembrance (*Dhikr*) of God

The titles ***Dhikr*** ("Remembrance"), ***Dhikrí*** ("My Remembrance") and ***Dhikrá*** ("Remembrance") have been used more often than any other titles, in reference to the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh has also used similar titles in reference to Himself:

This is the Most Great Remembrance through Whom the supreme felicity hath appeared in the world of creation, and every veiled and heedless soul hath groaned and lamented.[2] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following utterance the Báb refers to the Promised One coming after Himself as ***Dhikru'lláh*** ("the Remembrance of God"):

He is the Remembrance of God in that Dispensation.[3] The Báb

We shall know God through His Words

This chapter presents an extensive collection of verses from the Qur'án and from the Writings of the Báb concerning the Promise of the appearance of ***Dhikr*** (the Remembrance) and the fulfillment of that Promise. The common themes contained in this collection of Writings demonstrate that they are all revealed by the same divine Source.

He is indeed **a Remembrance** to Thee and to Thy people. Soon ye will be asked to answer for your deeds. Qur'án 43:44

O servants of the Merciful! Believe in God, the True One; and entertain no doubts regarding the Cause of the Remembrance.[4] The Báb

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This is **a Remembrance** (Dhikr, the Promised One) for My followers (the Muslims), and a **Remembrance** (the Promised One) for those (Messengers)

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* al-Furqán, "the Criterion, a basis of distinction between truth and falsehood", is a reference to the divine Book, the Qur'án.

before Me [Muḥammad]. But most of them (those expecting) know not the truth, and therefore, turn away. Qur'án 21:24

We have ordained Our Servant, the Remembrance from God, as a blessing amidst you, that ye may aid Him on the Day of Resurrection.[5] The Báb

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Indeed that which ye have been promised is true; and the promise of the coming Religion will be fulfilled .... I swear by the Lord of the heaven and the earth! He (the Promised One) is the Truth .... Remind them, then. Verily, **the Remembrance** is beneficial for the believers. Qur'án 51:5–6, 23, 55

By the righteousness of God! He is indeed the Truth from God .... Hesitate not, be it for one moment, in accepting this Cause. We shall indeed question you—your hearing, sight, and heart. Verily, the Cause of God revealed by the Remembrance hath been irrevocably decreed in the Mother Book.[6] The Báb

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Do they expect other than that the "Hour" shall indeed come to them of a sudden [be fulfilled], at a time when its conditions (the signs of its coming) hath been given to them [in the Qur'án]? And when their **Remembrance** cometh to them, of what benefit are those signs? Qur'án 47:18

Verily, I am God, besides Whom there is no God. I have, in truth, raised up the Remembrance for My sake .... Verily, the Promise of your merciful Lord is the Truth. God is a witness over all things .... Then say: Verily, this Book is My proof from God. Whosoever desireth let him believe; and whosoever desireth let him turn away.[7] The Báb

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We have indeed revealed a Book [the Qur'án] unto you; in it is your **Remembrance** [the announcement of your Promised One is mentioned therein]. Will ye not comprehend? Qur'án 21:10

O people of knowledge! Fear ye God Who speaketh to you through the Remembrance! God teacheth you the meaning of the Book through the tongue of the Remembrance.[8] The Báb

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... And they deny **"the Remembrance of the All-Merciful"**. Qur'án 21:36

In truth, I am God, there is none other God but Me. Verily, I have decreed the grace of the Remembrance as My grace unto all creation.[9] The Báb

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How doth [the advent of] **the Remembrance** profit them? Verily a Messenger hath come unto them with clear signs; yet they have turned away from Him, and said: 'A crazed teacher'. Qur'án 44:13–14

Follow ye that which God hath, in truth, revealed unto you regarding the Remembrance.[10] The Báb

In the previous verse from the Qur'án (44:13) it is asked:

Will they benefit from [the coming of] **the Remembrance**? Qur'án (44:13 (tr. 1)

Of what benefit is [the coming of] **the Remembrance** to them?

Qur'án (44:13 (tr. 2)

A verse similar to this has been revealed in the Sura 51 adh-Dháriyát:

Counsel (them)! For **the Remembrance** is of benefit to the believers.

Qur'án 51:55

The translators of the Qur'án have rendered Dhikrá in the above verse as "mention of God". This translation is undoubtedly correct; inasmuch as remembering God is a source of joy to our spirit. However, careful attention to the verse shows us that another meaning is hidden in it; compare the following two verses:

Will they benefit from (the coming of) the ***Dhikrá***? Qur'án 44:13

Remind (them)! For [the acceptance of] the ***Dhikrá*** is of benefit to the believers.

Qur'án 51:55

A reference to the Báb may be found in the Quránic usage of *Dhikrí* ("My Remembrance"), *Dhikr* or *Dhikrá*. According to one Qur'anic dictionary, there is little difference in meaning between *Dhikr* ("recollection, remembrance (e.g. of God), reminiscence, memory, commemoration") and *Dhikrá* ("remembrance, recollection, memory. The Amíd dictionary defines *Dhikrá* as "Reminder, Remembrance". Therefore, *Dhikrá* means the Remembrance and Representative of God among the people. This meaning is similar to "Baqíatu'lláh" (the Remnant of God), which is one of the titles of the Promised Qá'im.

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[19] It is indeed the utterance of a noble Messenger, [20] endowed with power, near to the [Almighty] Lord of the Throne [on high]; [21] One to be obeyed and faithful. [22] Your Companion* is not possessed .... [27] He is but a Reminder or all the people of the world. [28] Then, whosoever desireth let him take the straight path.

Qur'án 81:19–22, 27–28

The Cause of the Remembrance is but Our Cause.[11] The Báb

Yet they turn away from the **Remembrance** of their Lord. Qur'án 21:42

He is a Witness over you, by Our leave. Ere long, the Supreme Remembrance of God, in the Day of Resurrection, will cause you to behold that which you have earned by your works.[12] The Báb

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It would make no difference to them, whether Thou warnest them or not; they will not believe. Warn, then, him who followeth the **Remembrance** and feareth

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* Companion refers to the Messenger (Manifestation). God speaks to us through His Messengers:
To everyone We have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p 249.

the All-Merciful in the Unseen; give them the joyful tidings of forgiveness and abundant reward. Qur'án 36:10–11

By the righteousness of your Lord! We are closer to you than your own selves. What hindereth you from perceiving the Exalted Remembrance of God?[13] The Báb

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Whosoever turneth away from the **Remembrance** of his Lord, He [God] shall cause him to suffer a great torment. Qur'án 72:17

Whosoever turneth away from Our Remembrance, none of his deeds will be acceptable unto God.[14] The Báb

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[100] On that Day, We shall present Hell for the disbelievers, [101] those whose eyes were veiled from recognizing My Remembrance, and who could not bear to hear [Him]. [102] Do the disbelievers imagine they can take My servants as friends instead of Me? We verily, have prepared Hell for the unbelievers to abide therein. [103] Say: Should We inform you who will lose the most by their deeds? [104] Those whose efforts for worldly benefits are lost, while they imagine that they do good work. [105] **They are those who believe not in the signs of the Lord, or that they shall ever attain His Presence. Vain, therefore, are their works, and no weight will We allow them on the Day of Resurrection. [106] This shall be their reward—Hell. Because they were unbelievers, and treated My signs and My Apostles with scorn.*** [107] As to those who believed [in those Apostles] and did righteous deeds, their abode will be in the Gardens of Paradise, to abide therein eternally, with no desire to leave. Qur'án 18:100–108

Explanation: The above verses were revealed in Sura 18 al-Kahf ("The Cave"), the sura that covers an important part of the history of the Bahá'í Faith. These verses clearly show that many people deprive themselves of seeing the Remembrance (Dhikr) or hearing His words. Instead of accepting the Remembrance as their Friend and Protector, and following the guidance of God, they take God's servants (their religious leaders and others) as their friend, and vainly imitate them. By such behavior, they deprive themselves of the greatest honor, i.e. being in the Presence of God.

In the above verses refererence is made to the "Messengers" Who are subjected to scorn and denial. They are the two Promised Ones of our age, Who have frequently been represented in the Qur'án as "**the Remembrance**" or "**My Remembrance**".

Ere long, on the Day of Resurrection, God will inform you, with the tongue of Remembrance of your doings, manifest or concealed.[15] The Báb

Do men imagine that the Remembrance beholdeth not your doings? Nay, He is a Witness from God their Master over the whole of creation.[16] The Báb

Sura 25 al-Furqán

This sura provides many signs concerning the two Promised Onesof our era. According to these signs the Promised Day is when people:

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* Words in bold are translated in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 117.

25:11—Deny "the Hour"; as we saw before, "the Hour" is the time of the appearance of the Promised One.

25:18—They forget the **Remembrance**.

25:21—Have no hope that they will be in the Presence of God.

The Promised Day is when:

25:25—The heavens are cleft asunder, and the angels descend from the heavens.

This is also a sign of the appearance of the Promised One of the age, which we have previously discussed.

After the above signs, the Qur'án announces:

> [26] On that Day [the Promised Day], in truth, the dominion shall belong to [God] the All-Merciful. It will be a difficult Day for the unbelievers. [27] It is a Day when the oppressor [the unbeliever] will bite his hands in regret, and say: "Oh that I had followed the way of the Messenger [the Promised One of the Qur'án]. [28] Woe unto me! O that I had not taken that person as a friend [29] who, after appearance of "**the Remembrance**", misled me [prevented me from believing]. Satan is always a traitor to man. [30] The Messenger [the Promised One of the Qur'án] will say: **O My lord! Indeed, My people have turned away from the Qur'án.**
> Qur'án 25:26–30

The above verses appear to refer to Muḥammad. However, a careful examination of their meaning shows that the future Messenger, meaning the Promised One of the Qur'án is intended. We can find the following signs in these verses:

- All the Messengers have announced that in this age, for the first time, God will evidently seize the government in His hands and will enthrone His Promised One. The outward fulfillment of this Promise will be achieved in the future.
- The Promised Day is a difficult Day for the unbelievers; inasmuch as belief in the new religion of God requires courage and sacrifice. At the time of the appearance of new Messengers, people regard their love of the world easier than the love of God. Other verses of the Qur'án testify to this truth:

> The Day when the Summoner shall summon to a stern business .... The unbelievers will say: This is a difficult Day. Before them, the people of Noah denied Our Servant. And said: He is possessed.
> Qur'án 54:6, 8–9

- After departing this world, the deniers of the Promised One of God realize their error, have regrets, and wish they had followed the Messenger of God, i.e. the Promised One of our age, and hastened to aid Him.
- ***Dhikr*** ("Remembrance") has been used as a title for the Promised One of our age, in many verses of the Qur'án:

> He is indeed a **Remembrance** for Thee and for Thy people. And soon ye shall be brought to account.
> Qur'án 43:44

- The fact that the people go astray after the appearance of "**the Remembrance**" (a title for the Promised One of our age) shows that a Messenger other than Muḥammad is intended.

The above verses testify that most people prefer vain imitation to investigation. Instead of following the commandments of God, they listen to a religious leader, family or their friends. They only realize this great error after leaving this physical world, and regret that they did not recognize their Promised One, "**the Remembrance**", during their earthly life. It is then that they realize that what hindered their recognition of and belief in the Promised One was Satan (i.e., the self-conceited and arrogant leaders of religion or their selfish egos) . It is a Day when the deniers of the Promised One would say to themselves:

> Woe unto me! O that I had not taken such a person as a friend. After the appearance of the Remembrance, he misled me. Satan is always a traitor to the people. Qur'án 25:28

After facing so much denial and ingratitude, the new Messenger of God turns to the court of His Almighty Creator to say: **O God! My people (Muslims) have abandoned your Book!** Instead of obedience to your commandment, they follow their selfish egos and passions.

In addition to all these signs, the words, "**On that Day**" show that the above verses are related to a future date, and not to the past. Therefore, which "Messenger" are the people denying? Which Messenger is revealed with the title "the Remembrance"? Which Messenger considers Muslims as His people? Which Messenger complains about Muslims abandonment of the Qur'án?

> *O ye that circle the throne of glory! Hearken unto My Call which is raised by this Remembrance .... He is seated, with Truth, upon the earth by the leave of God, that He may teach the people the mysteries of their origin, till all testify that their Creator is God, the true One, besides Whom there is no other God; that He is verily the Servant of God, and the portal to His proofs for all creation.*[17] The Báb

Sura 20 Ṭá-Há'

> [99] Thus We relate to thee the accounts of what hath transpired. Indeed We have given thee a Reminder from Our presence. [100] Whosoever turneth away from Him shall, on the Day of Resurrection, carry a burden. [101] Abiding in it [that burdened state] eternally and evil for them [the deniers] that load on the Day of Resurrection! .... Thus have We revealed the Qur'án in Arabic; and in it We set forth the warnings; perchance they may fear God, and be reminded [not forget the Remembrance] .... And whoso turneth away from My Remembrance* truly his will be a life of misery; and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall raise him up blind. Qur'án 20:99–101, 113, 124

> *Indeed God hath ordained the greatest of bounties in your Day to be this Exalted Remembrance of God; and God is a Witness over all things.*[18] The Báb

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* A ḥadíth in *Biḥáru'l-Anvár* states this verse is a reference to the Promised Qá'im.

Sura 23 al-Mu'minún

In this sura our Creator speaks to us about His Promised One, "the Remembrance":

> [71] But if the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth and all that is therein would be corrupted. Instead, We have sent them **their Remembrance**; albeit, they turned away from **their Remembrance**. [72] Dost thou [O Prophet] ask them for a recompense? The reward of thy Lord is best; and He is the best of the Providers. Verily thou callest them unto the straight path. Qur'án 23:71–73

The following points have been discussed in the above verses:

- People have always asked the Prophets to produce miracles to prove the truth of their claim. However, it has always been contrary to the good-pleasure of God to resort to such extraordinary means that would influence people's freedom of choice.
- Instead of miracles, God has sent His Messenger, **the Remembrance**, armed with Divine knowledge and wisdom. However, the people turn away from this truly great miracle.
- God's Messenger does not expect any rewards from people; on the contrary, God rewards people. The duty of the Messenger is only to guide the people to the right Path.

How different is our way of thinking from God's Plan and wisdom! For instance, in the time of Moses, some people said: "Why has God appointed a murderer as a Messenger?" In the time of Jesus, they said: "How can a fatherless young man be a Messenger?" In the time of Muḥammad they said: "Why has God appointed an illiterate nomad as a Prophet?" In our time also they say: "Why has God appointed a 25-year-old merchant from Shíráz the Promised Qá'im?"

At the end of the Sura 23 al-Mu'minún, God speaks of the believers in this new Faith:

> [109] A group of My servants say: 'Our Lord! We believe; forgive our sins, and have mercy on us. Thou art the best of those who show mercy.' [110] But ye mocked them [the believers in the new Faith] so much so that it [your heedlessness] caused you to forget **My Remembrance**, while you used to laugh at them. Qur'án 23:109–110

Explanation: Who else but the believers in the new Promised One of God would say: "Our Lord we believe"? Who else but the Messenger of God, i.e. "the Remembrance of God" would be mocked by the people?

> *They are the true believers who, in very truth, seek not for themselves a Beloved other than God, the All-Merciful, and His Remembrance.*[19] The Báb

> *FEAR ye God and breathe not a word concerning His Most Great Remembrance other than what hath been ordained by God, inasmuch as We have established a separate covenant regarding Him with every Prophet and His followers.*[20] The Báb

Sura 51 al-Dháriyát

> [52] No Messenger came to those before them but that they said: 'He is a sorcerer or a madman'. [53] Have they [the former generations] handed down to them [the people of the time of the Promised One] this same saying? Nay, [it is not so]; they themselves are a rebellious people. [54] Turn, then, away from them. There is no blame on thee. [55] Warn them, then. For **the Remembrance** benefits the believers .... [60] Woe unto them that disbelieve in their Promised Day. Qur'án 51:52–55, 60

The above verses teach us the following points:

- There can be no doubt regarding the coming of the new Promised One and the new religion.
- Just like former generations, people of our time will deny their Promised One.
- Have the people of our time inherited their ways of thinking and acting from those former generations? Have such thoughts been transferred from the former generations to the new ones? No, it is not so; this tendency to deny is not an inherited trait.
- Muḥammad's only responsibility is to warn and remind the people that belief in "the Remembrance" is to their benefit; and denial of that Promised One is their loss.
- God gives us the chance to awaken with the warning at the end of the sura of the consequences of denial. He warns us that an unpleasant fate, in the eternal world, awaits if we deny or ignore the Promise of the appearance of the Remembrance.

We have previously studied the following verses of the sura:

> Indeed the Promise ye have been given is true; and indeed the promise of the appearance of the Religion will be fulfilled .... By the Lord of the heaven and the earth! He [the Promised One] is true. Qur'án 51:5–6, 23

> *GOD had, in truth, proposed Our Mission unto the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid thereof. However, Man, this 'Alí, Who is none other but the Great Remembrance of God, undertook to bear it.*[21] The Báb

The followers of the Remembrance

Ahl-al-Dhikr ("the followers of the Remembrance") appears in verses 16:43 and 21:7. What is the purpose of this expression?

> [36] We verily raised up a Messenger in every ummah .... [43] Before thee, the Messengers We sent were men who received Revelation. Ask ye then the followers of the Remembrance, if ye know not. Qur'án 16:36, 43

Who are ***"Ahl-al-Dhikr"***? Muslim commentators have failed to interpret this expression correctly. Many of them believe that it refers to Jews and Christians. This interpretation is not reasonable. How is it possible for the deniers of Islám to know the truth of something that Muslims do not know? In general, why should Muslims seek help from deniers for an answer to a difficult question?

Another group of interpreters, such as Yúsuf 'Alí, say that this verse is addressed to the infidels who must ask the Jews in order to better understand the truth of Islám. Such an argument is also not sensible. The idol-worshippers pay no attention to the Jews, how much less would they ask them about God's method in sending the Messengers—or any other matter related to faith or belief.

> *They question the bat of darkness regarding the rising of the sun.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

> [1] The people's Day of Reckoning is nearing, yet they are heedless, and have turned away. [2] Never doth a Remembrance from their Lord come unto them except that, while hearing Him, they are disporting themselves. [3] Their hearts are heedless, and they confer in secret; the oppressors say: "Is this more than a man like you? Will ye consider magic that which ye see with your own eyes?" [4] He [the Remembrance] saith: "My Lord knoweth all that is spoken in the heavens and on the earth. He is the Hearer, the All-Knowing." [5] "Nay," they say: "[these are] dreams; He hath forged it! He is [only] a poet; otherwise, like former Messengers, He would have brought us a sign [miracl])."
>
> [6] Before them, the places where their inhabitants did not believe, We destroyed them. Will these people (learn from the past and) believe? [7] We sent, before thee, Messengers, men who received Revelation. **Ask the followers of Remembrance [(*Ahl-al-Dhikr*], if ye know not. [8]** We gave them bodies that needed nourishment, and did not have eternal life on this plane .... [10] We reveal unto you a Book [the Qur'án] in which your **Remembrance** is mentioned. Will ye not comprehend? Qur'án 21:1–8,10

The following points are raised in the above verses:

- The Day of Reckoning, which is the time of the appearance of the Promised One, has come. (This topic has been discussed, in detail, in previous chapters.)
- However, the people are heedless and unaware. Some, even after hearing of the news, remain in denial.
- Such heedlessness and denial is not new; it has always been this way.
- Even though people see with their own eyes the spiritual power and majesty of the Promised One, they do not trust the evidence of their own eyes. They say to themselves: "These works are all magic and witchcraft."
- Some people believe His words are lies, that He is merely a poet.
- People expect their Messengers to perform miracles. Beautiful and profound words do not satisfy them.
- God has never acquiesced to inappropriate demands.
- People are aware of God's method. Why then do they not take counsel?
- God's method has always been to choose a man like other humans and teach him His Words.
- If you doubt this truth ask the followers of the new Promised One, i.e. "**the followers of the Remembrance**".
- The Qur'án has prophesied the appearance of the Remembrance. (The appearance of the Promised One is mentioned throughout the Book.) Why not judge based on laws of reason and understanding?

What should the Muslims ask "the followers of the Remembrance"? The teachings of the two Promised Ones of our time inform us of the following truths on how to interpret the above verses of the Qur'án:

- It has been God's method to send Messengers to every people.
- Those Messengers have been humans like other people—humans who receive a revelation from God.
- This method has now been repeated with the appearance of a Messenger named "**the Remembrance**".
- If you do not believe this sensible fact, ask "**the followers of the Remembrance**" that they may convince you that there has never been, and will never be, any change in God's method of sending Messengers.

Next, the Qur'án clarifies the Mission of "the Remembrance", in the following verse:

> We have sent thee "**the Remembrance**" with clear proofs and **heavenly Books**, that He may explain to them, clearly, that which hath been revealed for them; perchance they may reflect. Qur'án 16:44

The above verse clearly shows that God's new Promised One will disclose the mysteries hidden in the Qur'án. His followers, meaning "**the followers of the Remembrance**", will benefit from His heavenly Books,* and will clarify the difficulties found in the Qur'án for others, including Muslims.

> *We have, of a truth, sent down this divinely-inspired Book unto Our Servant .... Ask ye then Him Who is Our Remembrance of its interpretation, inasmuch as He, as divinely-ordained and through the grace of God, is invested with the knowledge of its verses ....*[23] The Báb

> *Veiled as they remain within their own selves, the generality of the people have failed to perceive the sweet accents of holiness, inhale the fragrance of mercy, or seek guidance, as bidden by God, from those who are the custodians of the Scriptures. He proclaimeth, and His word, verily, is the truth: "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not." Nay rather, they have turned aside from them and followed instead the Sámirí† of their own idle fancies.*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> On the Day of Resurrection [the Rise of the Promised One], God will judge between you concerning that which ye differ. Qur'án 22:69

> Assuredly God shall judge between them, on the Day of Resurrection, concerning that which they differ. Qur'án 10:93

> *Suffer not yourselves to be veiled by that which ye have heard from your leaders of religion. Ask then Him Whom God hath well-grounded in His knowledge,*

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* In these verses, mention has been made of "Books". Muhammad brought only one Book. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh each revealed many Books.

† A Hebrew magician in the court of the Pharaoh who, during the exodus fashioned the Golden Calf and persuaded people to worship it while Moses was receiving the ten commandments on Mt Sinai. *Sámirí* has been allegorically used to mean a deceiver and misleader.

concerning matters related to your religion .... O people! Fear God! And seek not knowledge from springs that are impure. Seek it then from pure, soft-flowing and crystal Springs.[25]
Bahá'u'lláh

According to the decree of God, we must seek the truth of every religion from its followers, not from its deniers. However, most people have ignored, and continue to ignore, this command.

Would ye ask the Jews whether Jesus was the True One from God, or the idols if Muḥammad was an Apostle of His Lord, or inquire from the people of the Qur'án as to Him Who was the Remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great?[26]
Bahá'u'lláh

O CONCOURSE of the faithful! Verily the object of each and every sign revealed by God in the Scriptures or in the world at large or in the hearts of men is but to make them fully realize that this Remembrance is indeed the True One from God. Verily God is cognizant of all things through the power of eternal Truth. O people of the world! I swear by your Lord, besides Whom there is none other God! He, verily hath left no testimony for anyone save the Remembrance and this Book .... 'Verily I am God and there is none other God but Me. Hence worship Me, and for the sake of Him Who is the Most Great Remembrance, offer your prayers, purged from the insinuations of the people, for verily your Lord, the One true God, is none other than the Sovereign Truth. Indeed such as invoke others besides Him are deservedly numbered among the inmates of the fire ....

O people of the earth! Fear God .... Verily, the Remembrance is the Truth from the one true God. Should ye believe in anyone except Him, by the Decree of God, the True One, ye shall be recorded, in the Mother Book (Qur'án) as the inmates of the fire. ... The Remembrance is only to state the Truth from God, the Exalted, the Wondrous. He is the Remembrance from God to announce unto you the glad-tidings of the fulfillment of His Promise, and warn you of His chastisement, as recorded in the Mother Book .... Verily God hath made the Remembrance better for you than your own selves that He may recite unto you the verses of God, to purify you, and cause you to step out of the darkness into Light. God is Witness over all things ....[27]
The Báb

It behooveth every man to speak forth the praise of His Lord, and to engage in extolling this Remembrance.[28]
The Báb

God testifieth that there is no God but Him, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. And this, verily, is the True Qá'im Whose appearance ye have been promised.[29] The Báb

I affirm that no Paradise is more sublime for My creatures than to stand before My face and to believe in My holy Words, while no fire hath been or will be fiercer for them than to be veiled from the Manifestation of My exalted Self and to disbelieve in My Words.[30]
The Báb

Ere long will ye find your deeds recorded by the hand of the Remembrance upon a scroll before God.[31]
The Báb

1 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 58.
2 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 50. (prov. tr.)
3 The Persian Bayán, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
4 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 42. (prov. tr.)
5 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 137. (prov. tr.)

6 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 103. (prov. tr.)
7 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 91. (prov. tr.)
8 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 60. (prov. tr.)
9 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 38. (prov. tr.)
10 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 24. (prov. tr.)
11 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 60. (prov. tr.)
12 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 46. (prov. tr.)
13 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 47. (prov. tr.)
14 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 66. (prov. tr.)
15 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 60. (prov. tr.)
16 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 84. (prov. tr.)
17 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 105. (prov. tr.)
18 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, pp. 22–23. (prov. tr.)
19 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 34. (prov. tr.)
20 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 46.
21 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 70.
22 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 79. (prov. tr.)
23 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 44–45.
24 *Gems of Divine Guidance*, pp. 17–18 (gr 25)
25 Risáliy-i-Ayyám-i-Tis'ih, pp. 279–280. (prov. tr.)
26 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 42 (gr 79)
27 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, pp. 56–58. Part of this quotation is from *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 69, the rest is a prov. tr.
28 Ḥaḍrat-i-Nuqṭiy-i-Úlá, p. 68. (prov. tr.)
29 'Ahd-i-A'lá, pp. 232–233. (prov. tr.)
30 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 87.
31 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 119. (prov. tr.)

Part 11
The path to the recognition of the Messengers of God

This part consists of 3 chapters:

26. **What is the gift of faith and in whose hands is it?**
27. **Reasons people neglect the call of the Messengers of God**
28. **Summary of the "Great Puzzle" of the Qur'án**

Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favourably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain.[1] Bahá'u'lláh

This is an advice; then whosoever desireth let him take a path to his Lord. Qur'án 76:29

1 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 27.

26
What is the gift of faith and in whose hands is it?

This chapter is of special importance inasmuch as it uses the divine Scriptures to offer a significant explanation of the purpose of God in creating human beings, and of the relationship between the Creator and His people. Without understanding this link between the Creator and His creation, increasing our knowledge of God, which is the purpose of our creation, would be impossible. Most people are unaware that their understanding of the mysteries of love and faith in God has been hindered by the abuse of religion and faith by their religious leaders. Much of what people know is contrary to the plan of creation.

To begin, we need to know that the gift of faith is the greatest bounty bestowed by God on humanity. It is impossible to exaggerate the greatness of this peerless gift; compared to it all other favors and blessings in the world are as drops compared to an ocean, or an atom compared to the sun; inasmuch as any favor or comfort has a limited life except the gift of faith, hope, and trust in the love and mercy of God towards His servants.

Based on the testimony of God, recorded in the heavenly Books, the recognition of and faith in God's Messengers, and obedience to their commandments, is the cause of happiness and prosperity in all the worlds of God. According to the teachings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, after the life in this world, other worlds are awaiting us. Nothing in creation is subject to limitations; just as our life is eternal, the worlds of God are innumerable. Ignoring the Call of the two new Messengers of God for this era, deprives us of the eternal gifts and blessings in all the worlds of God. We should not belittle this Call; inasmuch as the purpose of our creation is the attainment of the gift of faith and eternal life.

It is deeply regrettable that, these days, many people—- especially the young—despise this great favor and precious gift as worthless. Leaders of religion have played a grave part in the decline of religious faith. Those who claim to guide people to the eternal Heaven have, in every age, led them to the path of destruction and death, and prevented them from attaining the true purpose of their creation.

> *They appear in the garb of knowledge, though they be skilled in the arts of ignorance.*[1]
> 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Ignorant and selfish leaders of religion have, in the name of God and religion, taken advantage of their followers in every imaginable way. They have contaminated the pure religion of God with superstition and prejudice, removed it from the domain of knowledge and reason, and polluted it with politics and the pursuit of power. According to the teachings of the Prophet Zoroaster: "If shown to the Founder of that religion, He would not recognize it."

The Bahá'í Faith sanctifies the religion of God from all such impurities, and exalts it to the highest station of glory and majesty. It demonstrates that the love of God, and submission to, and reliance upon, the Creator of the universe, is the supreme foundation of honor, and the greatest treasure for the establishment of peace and unity in the world.

Gift of faith—it is in God's hands

Only by the leave of God can one attain His Court of nearness; this truth has been repeatedly stated in divine Scriptures; nevertheless, most people are unaware of it:

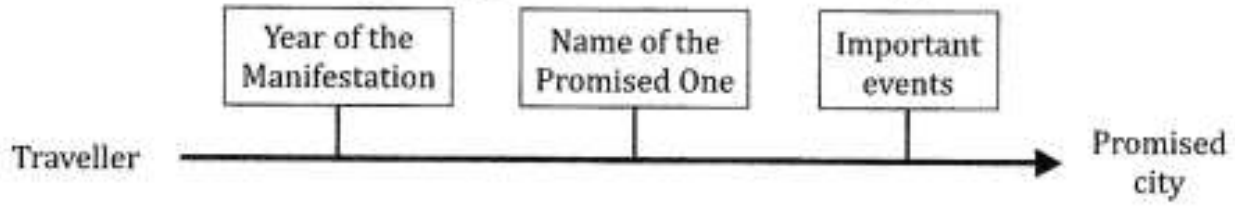
> None can attain faith save by the leave of God. Qur'án 10:100

> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him .... John 6:44

Without the leave of God, even the Messengers are incapable of granting the gift of faith. The following verse is addressed to Muḥammad:

> Thou canst not guide whomsoever Thou desirest, but God guideth whom He will; and He knoweth well those who merit guidance. Qur'án 28:56

This chapter is not about learning of the Promise of God; it is about meeting the Promised One. Imagine we are heading for a city and that this city is the home of the Promised One. The verses we have studied so far are the signs that we have seen on the way; they guide us to the intended city.



The signs met on the journey to the Promised city

Our purpose is not just to undertake a journey; it is to behold the face of the Beloved. How great are the number of travelers who reach the end of their journey, but are deprived of attaining the beauty and glory of the Beloved! How great the number of seekers who learn of the Promise, but are deprived of meeting the Promised One.

The signs and verses that we study in the Qur'án are like the garment on the body of the Beloved; our aim is meeting with the Beloved, not the discovery of His garment. Of what benefit is it to find "the garment of Joseph", but not attain His Presence, and not to see His "Blessed Beauty"?

According to the decree and wisdom of God, the divine Beloved conceals His beauteous countenance from strangers; He only reveals His supernal and wondrous Beauty to friends and lovers—those who in their eagerness to behold His face abandon ease and comfort, and submit to any hardship. To attain the Presence of that matchless Beauty requires effort, search and boundless love.

Bahá'u'lláh asks us not to speak unless we find a hearing ear, and not to sow "the seeds of wisdom" unless we find a pure soil. Brackish ground is not fit for

seeds of divine mysteries.[2] Neither is it allowable to contend with anyone when bestowing the gift of faith:

> *Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favourably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation. If your hearer responds, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, turn ye away from him ....*[4] Bahá'u'lláh

> *If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindliness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfils its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning ....*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

Through the verses of the Qur'án, the previous chapters of this book have taught us the "signs" of the way. This chapter teaches us the secrets to attaining the presence of the Beloved. The first and the most important question is this: How can we obtain the precious gift of faith and the love of God? Is this gift wholly in God's hands, or do we also have a part to play? If it is in both, the hands of God and ours, what is our part in this event and this deal? It is necessary to remove the veil from this "great mystery", so that the seekers of the path of Truth are made aware of the greatest gift of God, and its role in their eternal destiny. then while they have a chance, they may reap the benefits of this great bounty and this matchless gift. After all, the purpose of our creation is to attain "the Presence of God".

> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

If our search into the world of mystery did not lead us to this meeting with our Creator, our lives would be in vain; we would reap from the garden of life only disappointment and regret.

Our age is an age of hardship, suffering and misfortune. Most people have turned away from the worship of God, and instead are worshipping the material world; they are satisfied with the love of objects rather than the love of God. Such people—whose number is continually increasing—have invented a special belief system for themselves, and do whatever they desire. Conversely, there are some who are fervently drawn to the presence of God, who have not yet lost hope and continue to search. These people are confident that the compassionate Creator will never abandon His perplexed servants without providing a friend or helper. This chapter has been written for these patient seekers and lovers of God.

> For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the sovereign Lord. Repent and live. Ezekiel 18:32

> *Hence God desireth that all men should be guided aright .... However, such as are conceited will not suffer themselves to be guided. They will be debarred from the*

Truth, some by reason of their learning, others on account of their glory and power ....[6]
The Báb

GOD hath, at all times and under all conditions, been wholly independent of His creatures. He hath cherished and will ever cherish the desire that all men may attain His gardens of Paradise with utmost love ....[7]
The Báb

Regarding the interpretation of Jesus' prophecy stating that our age is the age of "oppression and difficulty", "misfortune and calamity",* in the Kitáb-i-Íqán Bahá'u'lláh explains that the tribulation and affliction is a reference to the confusion besetting the believers who thirst for truth, but do not know whom to turn to or how to obtain that precious gift.

This affliction is daily increasing, inasmuch as in our age Bahá'u'lláh has initiated a new World Order. The current calamitous world represents a period of transition from the old world order that has seen a great increase in the number of religious sects, and the upsurge of "short and easy ways" to God. Each soul has fashioned a god for itself, and has made out of God's religion a path to acquire the honor and riches of this world. The paths of perversion have never been so numerous. Can a greater calamity than this be imagined that a person be the lover of the sun but is only able to find darkness? Can a greater affliction be imagined than a seeker desiring the presence of God, peace and tranquility, but finding nothing except enmity, prejudice and hypocrisy among those who claim faith and support from God's religion?

To better understand the danger and severity of this great calamity and this depressing and wearying perplexity, imagine that you reside in a city whose drinking water is contaminated with dangerous poisons. However, only you and your friends are aware of this contamination. Others are drinking this contaminated water, with great confidence and without fear, assuming that if there were a problem with the water those responsible for purifying the water would have warned them. At this time, their minds are at peace. If you talk to them about the contamination of the water, they ignore you; they may even become angry and protest that you are disturbing their peace. However, you and your friends are very worried and are willing to go in search of pure water in any faraway place to protect yourself and others. If you can find a solution to this problem, then the light of knowledge and hope will shine in your soul. If you are of those who thirst, read this chapter with care; reflect on the verses that disclose this wellspring of the water of life. If you have any questions, then ask God to assist you, since He is more compassionate than all those who show compassion (Qur'án 7:151). If your love for God, and your hope and trust in His loving-kindness is firm, and if your heart is free from prejudices and love of the world, God's grace and mercy will always be your guide.

He that loveth me .... I too will love him and will manifest myself to him.
John 14:21

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* The Great Tribulation

Ye have embraced the Truth , meaning that, through His gracious favour, ye have attained this station; and the one true God hath directed His grace and bounty toward you.[8] Bahá'u'lláh

Indeed, He guideth whom He willeth to the Path of Bahá (Glory) ....[9] Bahá'u'lláh

This mention and utterance are for those who truly seek the path of guidance.[10] Bahá'u'lláh

It is related that one day they came upon Majnún sifting the dust, his tears flowing down. They asked, "What doest thou?". He said,"I seek for Laylí." "Alas for thee!" they cried, "Laylí is of pure spirit, yet thou seekest her in the dust!" He said, "I seek her everywhere; haply somewhere I shall find her."[11] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb describes how the allegorical flower-picking angels observe the people of the earth from the eternal Paradise. If they see a flower that they love upon a tree in the garden of Love, they pick it and bring it to the knowledge of the Promised One.[12]

Not all people are alike. The beauty of creation is in its diversity. An American Bahá'í woman was wondering why some of her friends did not join the Bahá'í Faith. When she was on pilgrimage to the Bahá'í Shrines, she asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Some of my friends attained your presence .... But were not moved by your utterance. When I came here, I was utterly inebriated and completely overwhelmed by the power and majesty of the Cause of God. Why is it that my friends did not become Bahá'ís?"

In answer to this lady, 'Abdu'l-Bahá related a parable. In this story, He divided the people into four groups, as follows:

- At the gate of the garden of the Kingdom, some stand by the gate and look within, but do not enter.
- Others step into the garden, behold its beauty, but do not penetrate far.
- Still others encircle the garden, inhaling the fragrance, and having enjoyed its full beauty, pass out again by the same gate.
- However, there are always some who enter and becoming intoxicated with the splendor of what they behold, remain for life to tend the garden.[13]

Two thousand years before our time, Christians were faced with the same question. Jesus also used a parable to divide the people into four groups. In that story, the gardener or farmer is a symbol of the Manifestation of God. "Seed" is a symbol of the Word of God, earth or garden is a symbol for the heart of man:

Behold a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed:

- Some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them.
- Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.
- And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them.

- But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

He who has ears, let him hear. Matthew 13:4–9

Then Jesus interpreted the story of the farmer, the field and the seeds:

- When anyone hears the message about the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.
- What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.
- What was sown among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.
- But what was sown on good soil is a man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

The beauty of creation is in its diversity. If all were alike, life would have no beauty or meaning. The diversity of man's existence is the result of our freedom of choice. The divine Designer of creation has planned it in this way from the very beginning. There has never been and shall never be any changes in the Divine Plan.

For such is God's method, and no change canst thou find in His mode of dealing.
Qur'án 48:23

We must be kind to all, and treat all with respect—whether believers or unbelievers. Even the unbelievers have a role in the unfoldment of the plan of creation, since they increase the diversity and beauty of existence. To belittle them is to belittle the design of the divine Designer.

There are many verses that prove the gift of faith is in God's hands. Since this is an important topic, we will review some more examples:

God guideth whom He willeth into the path of absolute certitude. God doth not desire to mention him who hath disbelieved in God and His verses; and God, verily, loveth the righteous.[14]
The Báb

The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Matthew 13:10–11

God guideth, by His grace, whomsoever He pleaseth.[15] The Báb

For many are invited, but few are chosen. Matthew 22:14

You did not choose me, but I chose you .... John 15:16

Say: grace and bounty are in God's hands; He ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth for whomsoever He willeth.[16]
Bahá'u'lláh

Verily thy Lord unlocketh the door of knowledge upon the face of whomsoever He willeth. He is the Ordainer, the Wise.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

Even if We did send unto them angels and the dead speak to them ... they will not believe, unless God desireth. But most of them are ignorant. Qur'án 6:111

And God calleth to the Abode of Peace (Baghdád), and He guideth whom He will into the right way. Qur'án 10:25

The Báb states that on "the Day of Resurrection" (the time of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh) the people's spiritual eyes will be incapable of seeing and recognizing their Beloved, their hearts Desire. Only those whom God desires will be capable of seeing and recognizing the Promised One.[18]

Signs of belief

The love and faith in God cannot be expressed in words alone; the sign and proof of belief is goodly behavior, and praiseworthy speech and thought. It is impossible to have faith without sincerity and a purity of conscience. If belief in God is not accompanied by spiritual growth and development, it is only a mirage, a dream and vain imagining.

O YE SEEMING FAIR YET INWARDLY FOUL! Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted.[19] Bahá'u'lláh

They are seemingly adorned with the ornament of knowledge, yet lacking their hearts the fear of God; they appear as learned but, in truth, they are ignorant ....[20] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.[21] Bahá'u'lláh

Faith and the love of God reside in the hearts, and not on the tongues. Faith is hidden in the soul, and not apparent on the forehead, the turban or the cloak of hypocrites.

If a turban were to be the indication of man's merit, a camel that carrieth a thousand turbans should be regarded as the most learned amongst the people.[22] Bahá'u'lláh

God is to be found in the private chambers of our hearts, and not in churches, synagogues, temples or mosques. The gift of faith is so precious that only God has access to it; only He can recognize those worthy of this gift.

God knoweth those possessed of pure and discerning hearts and souls.[23] The Báb

Barring those unworthy of the gift of faith

There are many examples from Scriptures of apparent exceptions in the granting of the gift of faith. These verses have caused many misunderstandings. Let us examine a selection:

Those who deny Our signs are deaf and dumb, and drowned in darkness. God causeth whom He will to go astray; and whom He desireth He placeth onto the straight path. Qur'án 6:39

> He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.
> John 12:40

> Would ye wish to guide whom God hath caused to go astray? Qur'án 4:88

> *The divine Beauty hath been hid from their eyes. Were they to witness, they would not see; thus have We created them deaf, lacking in sight, and made them mute and speechless, consigned to the land of disgrace and humiliation.*[24]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> None can attain faith save by the leave of God; He shall place a veil upon the hearts of those who understand not. Qur'án 10:100

In praise of God and His relationship with His servants, we cannot find a more perfect utterance that the one below:

> *I have concealed the light of My Beauty; outwardly it may appear as darkness; but inwardly it is Light upon light, a Light above every other light.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

What is the meaning of the above quotes? Why should God desire to mislead some and guide others to the right path? Why does God conceal His Beauty from strangers? Many believers studying such quotes have concluded that there is "discrimination" or "exception" in bestowing the gift of faith. They think God bestows that precious gift only to His "friends". Other believers imagine that their belief is an accidental matter; one must have been lucky in having a friend or helper to assist them in obtaining this precious and peerless gem. We can find answers to these questions by studying the next section.

Essential conditions for the recognition of the Manifestations

A study of the divine Scriptures shows us that belief in God and the recognition of the Promised One of the age are not accidental, nor the result of exception or discrimination. God's laws are based on wisdom and justice. All people are subject to these laws and they cannot violate them. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that not an atom in the heavens or on the earth moves except by the leave of God.[26] This is confirmed by the Báb:

> *All are His servants and all abide by His bidding!*[27] The Báb

If attaining faith is subject to the laws created by God, it is necessary for us to understand those laws in order to benefit from God's guidance. This is important since our eternal destiny is dependent on being informed of the divine laws. Let us begin to address this challenge with an example, since God teaches us many truths through examples. Divine Scriptures liken the human heart to the earth, and God's words to seeds, grains or plants. What is needed for a seed or plant to grow?

Two heavenly factors	**Light**
	Rain
One earthly factor	**Favorable ground**

The same factors govern the spiritual world:

- God's words, like the sun, enlighten our spirit
- Divine grace and mercy, even as rain from the heaven of "the Cause" and divine wisdom, shower upon us and bestow eternal life.
- Our hearts, like the earth, are in need of the light of knowledge and the rain of divine grace and bounty.

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the two heavenly factors that are the source of the growth of "the seed of faith" in a human heart, as "the sun of knowledge" and "the clouds of bounty":

> *Say: O friends! ... The clouds of divine bounty are raining down in this Day, and the Day Star of His knowledge bestoweth radiance, guiding to His Path .... Hearken to the Words of the Peerless Friend, and act in such ways as beseem your station.*[28]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Who will benefit from "**the clouds of bounty**" and "**the sun of knowledge**"? Those who appreciate the value of the two heavenly gifts, meaning "Light" and "Rain". Who are these people? Their most important attributes are honesty and a purity of heart.

> *O SON OF SPIRIT! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.*[29]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Does the radiant sun need any proof and evidence to be recognized? "The sun is the proof of the sun." God's glory and majesty are so manifest that He has no need of evidence and proof. We must know "God through God":

> *With the eye of justice and a pure heart, thou shalt know God, the true one, through His own Self.*[30]
> Bahá'u'lláh

The seed of faith is so precious that God desires for it not to be wasted. He tells us that unless we find a hearing ear, we should not speak:

> O SON OF DUST! The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing, even as the cup-bearer, who proffereth not his cup till he findeth a seeker, and the lover who crieth not out from the depths of his heart until he gazeth upon the beauty of his beloved. Wherefore sow the seeds of wisdom and knowledge in the pure soil of the heart, and keep them hidden, till the hyacinths of divine wisdom spring from the heart and not from mire and clay.[31]
> Bahá'u'lláh

How great the number of people who read the Qur'án and find nothing in it worthy of attention and praise! Such people can only voice objection and criticism of a beautiful heavenly Book. Christian leaders have written many books refuting Islám and the Qur'án. The following verse is a description of such deniers:

> The glorious Qur'án is a Book hidden, which none shall touch save the pure in heart; it is a Revelation from the Lord of all worlds. Qur'án 56:77–80

Reflect on the Words of God. Those who read the Qur'án, with impure hearts, full of prejudice and arrogance, are unable to even "touch" —i.e. to sense or feel—that heavenly Book, how much less to comprehend the mysteries hidden in it. There is an immeasurable distance between the pearls of meaning

and divine mystery hidden in the Words of God, and the souls of prejudiced and fault-finding people. By the Plan of God, the inner eyes of such people are deprived from the bounty of His Presence:

> *Sanctified must be the eye if it is to truly recognize Him, and sanctified must be the tongue if it is to befittingly utter His praise.*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh states that a true seeker will have such a great discernment that he "*will discriminate between truth and falsehood, even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow.*"[33]

The Báb instructs us that we should see God with His own eyes, so that we may not be veiled and deprived from "***the mystery of Oneness***" in "***the ocean of Diversity***".[34]

The divine Scriptures, sometimes, speak of "knowledge and discernment (insight, vision)". What is the difference between the two?

> [This] *vision acteth as the agent and guide for true knowledge.*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Indeed, the attainments of man's understanding are dependent upon his keenness of sight.*[36] Bahá'u'lláh

Consider the following life example: Many people have a truly great spouse whom they know well but do not really appreciate. Many children have angelic parents but are contemptuous of these parents. **Such ungrateful people know, but do not perceive or recognize**; we may call them inwardly blind. By the same token, there are many people who read the verses of the Qur'án, the Bible, the Bayán or the Kitáb-i-Íqán, and learn their contents, but are incapable of perceiving the light of meaning radiating from these verses.

We could liken knowledge and perception to two different types of vision. One vision is in our hands, the other is in God's hands. To learn and to know is under our control; to perceive and recognize is in God's hands. The inner eyes guide the inner mind; without such a guide, our mind is incapable of seeing and recognizing the true path.

> *The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind.*[37] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following words, Bahá'u'lláh indicates three conditions for obtaining the gift of faith:

> *... we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God ....*[38] Bahá'u'lláh

- Opening our eyes: opening the inner eyes—perception
- Reflection: applying our power of thought; gaining knowledge
- Seeking the sanctuary of the Manifestation: Relying on prayer, and asking God for aid and assistance

> *They whose sight is keen, whose ears are retentive, whose hearts are enlightened, and whose breasts are dilated, recognize both truth and falsehood, and distinguish the one from the other.*[39] Bahá'u'lláh

- Keen sight: studying with great care and attention, weighing all matters, and reflecting on them
- Ears that are retentive: Having an open mind, being free from vain imagining and expectations, and judging truth from falsehood
- Enlightened hearts and dilated breasts: Having a good nature; being free from prejudice, selfishness, attachment to the material world and hypocrisy

Whoever turns to the court of the Almighty with a pure and enlightened heart, and an astute and detached mind, will surely attain the Presence of God.

God's light radiates everywhere and in everything; but only with inner eyes can we enjoy this limitless glory and majesty.

Consequences of ignoring the call of the Manifestations

In the Kitáb-i-Bayán, the Báb states that God's Manifestation is watching over His servants. If He sees a capacity for His manifestation in the mirror of the hearts of those who desire the gift of faith, he will, **by the leave of God**, reveal Himself to them:

> *Inasmuch as He is neither in motion nor at rest save by the leave of God, hallowed and glorifies be His Name.*[40] The Báb

The above utterance, once again, demonstrates that the gift of faith is only in God's hands. All things are from Him and return unto Him. The Manifestations have surrendered their will wholly to God, and take no step without His leave. As we saw at beginning of this chapter, the Qur'án also confirms this truth. Due to the importance of this matter, let us return to the verse:

> Thou [the Apostle of God] canst not guide whomsoever thou lovest; but God guideth whom He will, and He knoweth well those who merit guidance. Qur'án 28:56

This verse teaches us that even though outwardly we face a man, i.e. the Manifestation of God, in reality we are facing God and are hearing His Words. Undoubtedly, ignoring the Call of the Manifestation is the same as ignoring the Creator of the universe. All divine Scriptures testify that such heedlessness has grave consequences in the eternal world; it will result in eternal remoteness and separation from God.

> ... He who rejects me rejects him who sent me. Luke 10:16

> He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. John 5:23

> He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36

The following summons from Bahá'u'lláh is directed to those who have no hope or faith in God's grace and mercy. God asks them not to squander the gift of freedom of choice, not to ignore God's greatest gift to man, and while they have yet a chance, accept the cup of eternal life, and drink their fill:

O MOVING FORM OF DUST! I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me. The sword of thy rebellion hath felled the tree of thy hope. At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.[41]
Bahá'u'lláh

Thus saith the Lord

THE BEGINNING OF ALL UTTERANCE IS THE PRAISE OF GOD

O servants! The springs of divine bestowal are streaming forth. Quaff ye therefrom, that by the aid of the incomparable Friend ye may be sanctified from this darksome world of dust and enter His abode. Renounce the world and direct your steps toward the city of the Beloved.[42]
Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O friends! Suffer not yourselves to be far removed from the ocean of heavenly grace. He is come astonishingly near unto you. He Who hath been concealed form men's eyes is now come. How good is His coming! In one hand He is carrying the water of life and in the other the charter of true liberty. Cast ye away one thing and take hold of another. Cast away whatsoever pertaineth to the world and take firm hold of that which the hand of divine providence imparteth unto you. Lo, that which no eye hath ever beheld is now revealed. O friends! Hasten ye, hasten ye, hearken ye, hearken ye![43]
Bahá'u'lláh

Say: In this Day, the Day wherein the Heavens have been adorned with the sun of Divine bounty, hasten forth wholeheartedly, perchance ye may yet discover the cause of and motivation for the Revelation of the divine Being. One drop of the Ocean of Divine knowledge, in this Day, excelleth all the treasures of the world.[44]
Bahá'u'lláh

O friends! The Almighty saith: This is not the Day for idle talk. Hearken to the Voice of the Incomparable Friend, and accept ye that which shall make His servants aware and ensure their freedom.[45]
Bahá'u'lláh

We, verily, have commanded you ... to attain that which exalteth your station and promoteth your interests in every world of your Lord .... We have not created you for your own selves, but for service to the Cause of God, the Lord of all Worlds.[46]
Bahá'u'lláh

O servants! Verily I say, he is to be accounted as truthful who hath beheld the straight Path. That Path is one, and God hath chosen and prepared it. It shineth resplendent amongst all paths as the sun amongst the stars. Whosoever hath not attained it hath failed to apprehend the truth and hath gone astray. Such are the counsels of the incomparable, the peerless Lord.[47]
Bahá'u'lláh

O my Beloved One! Not every breast is worthy of Thy love, and not every heart is deserving of Thy friendship .... The seekers after the Sanctuary of reunion can never rejoice in the revelation of His Beauty unless they pass beyond the limits of vain imaginings. They must drink from the cup of renunciation, that they may enter the ancient Faith of God; and must don the garment of poverty in the path of Thy good-pleasure, that they may be honored with the robe of wealth, and be sick with love to attain the healing remedy. They must renounce the world of dust, to ascend to the Land of divine holiness; they must die in the wilderness of eternal search that they may attain eternal life, and abide in the land of abasement that they may enter the heaven of glory; they must taste the bitterness of separation to be nourished with

the sweetness of immortality, and pass beyond the wilderness of remoteness to abide and find rest in the Cities of nearness.[48] Bahá'u'lláh

O servants! Lifeless is the body that is bereft of a soul, and withered the heart that is devoid of the remembrance of its Lord. Commune with the remembrance of the Friend and shun the enemy. Your enemy is such things as ye have acquired of your own inclination, to which ye have firmly clung, and whereby ye have sullied your souls. The soul hath been created for the remembrance of the Friend; safeguard its purity. The tongue hath been created to bear witness to God; pollute it not with the mention of the wayward.[49] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O people! Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous loss.[50] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatsoever can be seen, will be destroyed and perish ..... One Word of His is better than all the riches of the world .... Well is it with him that attaineth unto it.[51] Bahá'u'lláh

How vast the domains of pomp and glory that were folded up and removed by the Hand of His Decree, returning the kings and their subjects to dust! Is there a morn that is not followed by night, or a life not ended in death? Soon shall the power of death seize all that can be seen and reduce it to utter nothingness .... Strive, then, that perchance ye may achieve deeds that wll be adorned with the crown of the good-pleasure of God, and may last as long as the kingdoms of earth and heaven remain.[52] Bahá'u'lláh

Your days are passing as swift as lightning. It is incumbent upon every soul to strive to attain, in these few and numbered days, an exalted and immortal station.[53] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever is forfeited, ye cannot and never shall be able to acquire hereafter.[54] Bahá'u'lláh

1 Risáliy-i-Siásyyih, p. 18. (prov. tr.)
2 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 218.
3 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 27.
4 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 279 (no. CXXVIII)
5 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 289 (no. CXXXII)
6 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 96.
7 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.
8 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, pp. 178–179. (prov. tr.)
9 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 17. (prov. tr.)
10 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, p. 17. (prov. tr.)
11 *The Call of the Divine Beloved*, p. 16 (The Seven Valleys, gr 10)
12 The Persian Bayán, p. 227.
13 http://bahai-storytelling.blogspot.com/2010/07/story-of-gate-of-garden-quote-from.html
14 The Persian Bayán, p. 92. (prov. tr.)
15 The Persian Bayán, p. 238. (prov. tr.)
16 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 71. (prov. tr.)
17 Má'ediy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 178. (prov. tr.)
18 The Persian Bayán, p. 238.
19 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 30–31 (Persian no. 25)
20 Risáliy-i-Siásyyih, p. 31. (prov. tr.)

21 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 24 (Persian no. 5)
22 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 373. (prov. tr.)
23 The Persian Bayán
24 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 49. (prov. tr.)
25 La'álí'ul-Ḥikmat, vol. 3, pp. 76–77. (prov. tr.)
26 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 188.
27 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 217.
28 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 212. (prov. tr.)
29 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 3 (Arabic no. 1)
30 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 376. (prov. tr.)
31 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 34–35 (Persian no. 36)
32 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 58 (gr 3.4)
33 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 268 (no. CXXV)
34 The Persian Bayán, p. 197.
35 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 35.
36 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 61 (gr. 3.10)
37 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 171.
38 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 217 (gr 241)
39 *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 9.
40 The Persian Bayán, p. 252. (prov. tr.)
41 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 29 (Persian no. 21)
42 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 67 (gr. 4.1)
43 *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, p. 967.
44 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 2. (prov. tr.)
45 Yárán-i-Pársí, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
46 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, pp. 208–209. (prov. tr.)
47 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, pp. 68–69 (gr. 4.6)
48 Risáliy-i-Tasbíḥ va Tahlíl, pp. 268–269.
49 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 68 (gr. 4.5)
50 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 104 (no. LII)
51 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 142. (prov. tr.)
52 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 302. (prov. tr.)
53 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 2, p. 335. (prov. tr.)
54 Áyát-i-Iláhí, vol. 1, p. 267. (prov. tr.)

27
Why people ignore the call of the Messengers of God

The veil of negligence and failure

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh reveals:

> *Consider the past. How many, both high and low, have, at all times, yearningly awaited the advent of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His chosen Ones. How often have they expected His coming, how frequently have they prayed that the breeze of divine mercy might blow, and the promised Beauty step forth from behind the veil of concealment, and be made manifest to all the world. And whensoever ... the light of the Unseen did shine above the horizon of celestial might, they all denied Him, and turned away from His face ....*
>
> *Ponder for a moment, and reflect upon that which hath been the cause of such denial on the part of those who have searched with such earnestness and longing. Their attack hath been more fierce than tongue or pen can describe.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh next describes, through the verse below, the way of the people:

> O the misery of men! No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn. Qur'án 36:30

Further on in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh shows how the above verse reflects the present age:

> *Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh then describes the objections and denials of the people towards the former Messengers in the hope that:

> *Perchance this may enable a few to cease to be perturbed by the clamour and protestations of the divines and the foolish of this age, and cause them to strengthen their confidence and certainty.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

In every age, at the beginning of a new Revelation the believers have been greatly out numbered by the unbelievers. It was this way at the start of Islám. The Báb tells us that Imám 'Alí was the only believer in Muḥammad for the first seven years:

> *... the very Qur'án whereunto unnumbered souls bear fealty today, was revealed in the midmost heart of the Arab world, yet to outward seeming for no less than seven years no one acknowledged its truth except the Commander of the Faithful* [Imám 'Alí]*—may the peace of God rest upon him—who, in response to the conclusive proofs advanced by God's supreme Testimony, recognized the Truth and did not fix his eyes on others.*[4] The Báb
>
> *What aileth ye that ye believe not in God and His Apostle? He summoneth you to believe in your Lord ....* Qur'án 57:8

In the same way that the the Prophet Muḥammad has been mostly rejected by the Jews and Christians so the Báb has been mostly rejected by the Muslims.The followers of the Báb also continued the way of the former generations; a group of them did not respond to the Call of their Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh. The Báb likens such deniers to fish that are immersed in the sea of His heavenly Book—the Bayán—and have gained life through it, but question its existence. He considers such believers insincere: *There are people who every night until morning busy themselves with the worship of God, and even at present when the Day-Star of Truth is nearing its zenith in the heaven of its Revelation, they have not yet left their prayer-rugs. If any one of them ever heard the wondrous verses of God recited unto him, he would exclaim: 'Why dost thou keep me back from offering my prayers?' O thou who are wrapt in veils! If thou makest mention of God, wherefore sufferest thou thyself to be shut out from Him Who hath kindled the light of worship in thy heart?*[5]

The Báb

In the following utterance, God addresses the leaders of the Zoroastrian religion in the same manner:

Say, O high priests! Ye are held in reverence because of My Name, and yet ye flee Me![6]

Bahá'u'lláh

Sadly, it was not only the followers of the earlier religious dispensations who rejected Bahá'u'lláh. Some of the followers of the Báb also continued in the way of former generations; a group of them did not respond to the Call of their Promised One. The Báb likens such deniers to fish that are immersed in the sea of His heavenly Book—the Bayán—and have gained life through it, but question its existence.[7] He considers such believers insincere.[8]

People are inclined to associate, only, with those who think like them; they tend to avoid people who think differently from them. Atheists enjoy associating with other atheists, Christians with other Christians, enlightened Muslims with other similarly enlightened Muslims, fanatical Muslims with other fanatical Muslims, and supporters of each political party with members of that party. Such tendencies prevent people from associating with a diverse group of enlightened people, and learning about their beliefs and thoughts.

Never shall mortal eye recognize the everlasting Beauty, nor the lifeless heart delight in aught but in the withered bloom. For like seeketh like, and taketh pleasure in the company of its kind.[9]

Bahá'u'lláh

Utter nothingness can never reach the Ancient of Days, nor evanescence attain immortality.[10]

Bahá'u'lláh

One of the most important reasons for the neglect of the new Messengers of God is that people blindly imitate and follow others, especially leaders of religions:

Thus in every Dispensation a number of souls enter the fire by reason of their following in the footsteps of others.[11]

The Báb

Say: Whosoever purgeth not his heart from the veils of vain imitation shall never be able to turn towards this resplendent, this exalted Face.[12]

Bahá'u'lláh

The people's inclination to engage in blind imitation—i.e., the following of others, especially the religious leaders—is greatly astonishing. When a person

has a complaint against another, the complainant chooses to be represented in court by experienced lawyers who know how to express reasons and proofs in defence of their client. A judge, skilled in the art of judgement, listens to the arguments of the prosecution and defence lawyers for many hours, perhaps days; and, after extensive deliberation, decides the case. However, most people, when faced with the most important decision of their lives upon which their eternal destiny is dependent, make their decision without the least effort or enquiry, based solely on rumors or other people's words! Can anything more astonishing than this be imagined?

> *Say: O thou who hast eyes to see! Speak not of that which thou hast not beheld, and refrain from bearing witness to that which thou hast not observed. The Path is open and manifest; behold and go forth.*[13] Bahá'u'lláh

> *... man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom ... unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.*[14] Bahá'u'lláh

In the following utterance Jesus states that people were intent on His martyrdom, based on what they had heard from their forefathers:

> You are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my words ... you do what you have heard from your father. John 8:37–38

The Báb points out that a great number of people are following the laws of the Qur'án, but are deprived of the fruits of the Tree of Life. They read that heavenly Book, but are ignorant of the true meaning and purpose of God.[15] That Promised One likens a believer to a mirror, and an unbeliever to a stone; God has the power to transform the stone into a mirror; but this is not in conformity with God's Will; inasmuch as it is a "stone" that desires to remain a "stone".[16] The Báb then explains that in the Day of the advent of the Promised One:

> ..... *whatever cause prompted the believer to believe in Him, the same will also be available to the unbeliever. But when the latter suffereth himself to be wrapt in veils, the same cause shutteth him out as by a veil.*[17] The Báb

The sun of the Cause of God, His glorious religion, is radiant at all times; but a vast number of people have covered their pure and radiant spirits with the clouds of idle fancy and vain imaginings; they are unable to see any sign of the great glory and Beauty of the Cause:

> *The Cause is manifest, it shineth resplendent as the sun, but the people have become veils unto themselves. We entreat God that He may graciously assist them to return unto Him.*[18] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Blessed is he who hath rent the intervening veils asunder and is illumined by the radiant light of divine Revelation.*[19] Bahá'u'lláh

God has testified that some people are so negligent in seeking the truth, being so taken up with the bounties of this world, and so lacking in spiritual capacity, that being confronted with the terrifying sight of Hellfire, meaning the

torment of eternal and everlasting separation from God in the eternal world, is the only cause of their awakening and awareness.

> In truth, those against whose desires the Word of God hath been fulfilled shall not believe, even if every sign is brought to them, until they see the painful torment [hellfire]. Qur'án 10:96–97

Bahá'u'lláh related the story of a man on whom the sun of the Beauty of God repeatedly shone from the horizon of His Manifestation (Bahá'u'lláh).

> *At all times the Sun of Beauty shone upon him from the horizon of Glory.*[20]

However, he not only failed to obtain the gift of faith, he rose up in opposition to that Promised One.

Some people's spirit is so filled with prejudice, lies and envy that hearing or seeing God's Words is like the blowing of the wind on a fire. It only serves to intensify their hatred and animosity.

> But those whose hearts are diseased, God's Words increases the defilement of their hearts; they will die remaining unbelievers. Qur'án 9:125

As we saw before, the gift of faith has such a high rank and station that even the Messengers of God cannot bestow it upon a soul without God's permission.[21] The Supreme Judge has always prevented, and will continue to prevent, the undeserving from obtaining this peerless favor and gift.

> *O God .... What ingratitude have Thy servants shown forth that hath caused them to be deprived of the rushing waters of Thy mercy, and debarred from the light of the Sun of Revelation.*[22] Bahá'u'lláh

> *The very deeds of His servants have debarred them from approaching the Lord of creation, while His All-Pervasive grace hath always overshadowed mankind ....*[23] Bahá'u'lláh

> *What ingratitude have Thy servants shown forth that Thou hast withheld them, one and all, from recognizing Thee?*[24] Bahá'u'lláh

> Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save .... But your inequities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you .... Isaiah 59:1–2

> Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19

> *How very strange that people have deprived their own ears from hearkening to Words that are gentler than the breezes of the dawn, and more tender than the spirit .... Those of consummate learning and perception are as scarce as the Elixir.*[25] Bahá'u'lláh

Isaiah describes the people of our time as follows:

> Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men .... The wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish .... Isaiah 29:13–14

> *But a myriad times alas for the wayward who are like unto dried-up leaves fallen upon the dust. Ere long mortal blasts shall carry them away to the place ordained*

for them. Ignorant did they arrive, ignorant did they linger and ignorant did they retire to their abodes.[26]
Bahá'u'lláh

Many hadiths prophesy the unseemly behavior exhibited by Muslims towards their Promised Qá'im; for instance, Imám Muḥammad Báqir stated:

> We heretofore gave the Book to Moses; but differences arose about it (Qur'án 11:110). He (the Imám) said: In the same way that this ummah (Muslims) is divided about the Book (Qur'án), soon they shall be divided about the Book brought by the Qá'im, in such wise that many will deny Him.[27]

> *Wert thou to ponder a while, thou wilt recognize that, apart from all these established truths and above-mentioned evidences, the repudiation, cursing, and execration, pronounced by the people of the earth, are in themselves the mightiest proof and the surest testimony of the truth of these heroes of the field of resignation and detachment .... For whatsoever hath come to pass, hath been prophesied by them who are the Mines of divine knowledge, and Recipients of God's eternal law.*[28]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Sura 12 Yúsuf first gives the glad-tidings of the advent of Dhikr ("Remembrance", or "Reminder", Qur'án 12:104), which is followed by a warning and a prophecy about the sudden appearance of the "Hour of the Manifestation" and the negligence of the people:

> Do they feel safe that the veil of God's torment will not come over them, or that the Hour will not, suddenly and without their knowledge, come to pass?
> Qur'án 12:107 (tr. 1)

> Do they think that if "the veil of torment" covereth their soul they will understand? Do they think that they will be aware of the sudden advent of "the Hour of Manifestation"?
> Qur'án 12:107 (tr. 2)

The above verse shows that people desire security in the existing condition of their lives. However, contrary to their desire, "the Hour" will arrive suddenly, and "the veil of torment", caused by their own heedlessness and denial, will overtake their spirit; albeit they are completely unaware of these overwhelming and perilous events.

The term "torment" has appeared in many verses of the Qur'án in reference to the fate of the people who consider "the Great Announcement" a lie:

> Surely the torment of the Lord will come; none can avert it .... Woe unto those who, on that Day, deny the truth, and entertain themselves with their caviling.
> Qur'án 52:7–12

The way people of our era live their lives is a clear witness that the prophecies of the Qur'án have all been fulfilled. How great the number of people who are wrapt in heedlessness; the past-times and apparent safety of this mortal life have distracted them from heeding God and securing their eternal destiny. Such people are so immersed in their vain pursuits that no news, no matter how joyous and great, can awaken them from the sleep of negligence.

Verily, the Most Great Announcement hath come, yet the people, for the most part, are heedless.[29]
Bahá'u'lláh

Short-sighted and ignorant people in the sight of God

Wise, enlightened and open-minded people—i.e. those who choose freedom of thought and conscience over enslavement to blind imitation—are much beloved and honored in the sight of God. According to Jesus, such people protect the world in the same way that salt preserves food. In contrast, the divine Scriptures warn against inward blindness, thoughtlessness and prejudice, traits that are designated as despicable and disgraceful. Can any fate more burdensome and sinister than the torment of Hellfire be imagined? The following verses have been revealed concerning inwardly blind and foolish people. Such people are the source of suffering, injustice and calamity in the world:

> Hearts have they with which they understand not, and eyes have they with which they see not; and ears have they with which they hear not; they are even like unto the common herd! Yea, they stray even further from the Path. Qur'án 7:179

> The basest of creatures, in the sight of God, are the deaf, the dumb, those who do not reflect. Qur'án 8:22

Could crassly ignorant and thoughtless people be any more despised? Do the wittingly oblivious have enough understanding to know that they are ignorant? Addressing such people, Bahá'u'lláh reveals:

> *Say: O ye who are inwardly blind! The Refuge of the world is come! It is the Day of vision. The All-Knowing Seer hath come. It is the season of sacrifice. Strive, then, in this day of bounty, that your names may be mentioned in the scroll of the benevolent.*[30] Bahá'u'lláh

> Whosoever is inwardly blind, in this world, shall be blind in the Afterlife, and shall stray still further from the Path. Qur'án 17:72

Selfish, short-sighted and self-conceited people

What else but our own selfish, short-sighted and conceited selves could cause our inner blindness? Divine verses warn us that "the insistent self", i.e. our inclination to selfishness, is our greatest enemy; we must treat it like an obstinate enemy.

> *The Evil One hath made your deeds seem fair in your eyes.*[31] Bahá'u'lláh

> *No enemy have ye save your own selves; know it, O people! Beware lest ye be of them that neglect this!*[32] Bahá'u'lláh

> *By the righteousness of God! Heedlessness is an instrument of the self .... I take refuge with God, from its evil and its deception.*[33] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Take heed lest thine own self withhold thee from that which We have destined for thee.*[34] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest.*[35] Bahá'u'lláh

The need to respect and show kindness to all

Once again, we must remember that our duty is to inform, not to judge. Even though prejudiced and short-sighted people are unworthy and despised in the sight of God, we are to treat all people with compassion, kindness and respect; inasmuch as we are all the servants of one Creator, and the image of a Skilled and All-Knowing Designer. To regard anyone with contempt is to belittle the work of the Designer of creation. Whatever prejudiced, imitating and inwardly blind people do, is the result of the gift of freedom bestowed by God upon all:

> *All are His servants and all abide by His bidding!*[36] The Báb

Judgement lies with God, not with us His sinful servants. We must never consider ourselves great and belittle others inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh informs us that we are not aware of our own end and destiny, let alone knowing that of others. In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, Bahá'u'lláh describes the true seeker and righteous believer in the following words:

> *With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire.*[37] Bahá'u'lláh

Acceptance of the new religion of God is the greatest decision of our lives. Most people, regardless of their current religion, simply do not question the Faith of their forefathers. Those that do question their beliefs, are more likely to discard all faiths rather than trust themselves to accept a new one. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that such people are like suckling babes; in the beginning, they need mild nourishment, so that they grow and develop, and become ready for belief.[38]

The Báb asks us to be forbearing towards irreligious and antagonistic people, because perhaps:

> *There may appear from them, through belief in God, the fruit of their existence; inasmuch as there existeth the potentiality* [for belief] *in every soul.*[39] The Báb

In countless prayers, Bahá'u'lláh asks God to extend His favor and kindness to the deniers of His Faith, and to assist them that they may not be deprived of eternal Paradise:

> *Make known unto Thy servants, O my God, the Sun that hath risen above the horizon of Thy grace and decree. Deprive them not of the Paradise Thou hast created in Thy Name, the Most Glorious.*[40] Bahá'u'lláh

> *My God, Thou Whom I adore and worship, Who art Most Powerful! I testify that no description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee ....*

> *O Thou Who art the All-Knowing! Wayward though we be, we still cling to Thy bounty; and though ignorant, we still set our faces toward the ocean of Thy wisdom. Thou art that All-Bountiful Who art not deterred by a multitude of sins from*

vouchsafing Thy bounty, and the flow of Whose gifts is not arrested by the withdrawal of the peoples of the world. From eternity the door of Thy grace hath remained wide open. A dewdrop out of the ocean of Thy mercy is able to adorn all things with the ornament of sanctity, and a sprinkling of the waters of Thy bounty can cause the entire creation to attain unto true wealth.

Lift not the veil, O Thou Who art the Concealer! From eternity the tokens of Thy bounty have encompassed the universe, and the splendors of Thy Most Great Name have been shed over all created things. Deny not Thy servants the wonders of Thy grace. Cause them to be made aware of Thee, that they may bear witness to Thy unity, and enable them to recognize Thee, that they may hasten towards Thee. Thy mercy hath embraced the whole creation, and Thy grace hath pervaded all things. From the billows of the ocean of Thy generosity the seas of eagerness and enthusiasm were revealed. Thou art what Thou art. Aught except Thee is unworthy of any mention unless it entereth beneath Thy shadow, and gaineth admittance into Thy court .... Thou art the King of all bounty, and the Lord of all favors, and supreme over all who are in heaven and on earth.[41] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O my God, O my God! Praise be unto Thee for having revealed Thy verses, and manifested Thy proofs. Thou hast illumined the hearts of Thy favored ones with the light of Thy knowledge, and the faces of the sincere ones with the radiance of Thine Utterance. I beseech Thee by the ocean of Thy grace, and the heaven of Thy generosity, and by what hath been treasured in Thy knowledge, and hidden in the treasury of Thy protection, and by the pearls concealed within the repositories of Thine exalted Pen, and by the light of Thy Countenance .... to aid them that have turned away to return unto Thee, and those who have denied Thee to profess their faith, and the wayward to return unto the court of Thy mercy, and to repent at the door of Thy forgiveness.

Thou art, verily, the Forgiving, the All-Bounteous,, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.[42] Bahá'u'lláh

Role of religious leaders

The portrayal of religious leaders in the divine Scriptures is not beautiful. In every age, the religious leaders are seen as preventing people from accepting belief in God's religion, instead of providing truthful guidance. In this age, by the sanction or order of religious leaders, over 20,000 believers in the new Faith of God have been murdered, in the cruelest manner, in the land of its birth (Iran). The role of religious leaders in the lives of the masses is so pervasive that a separate book is necessary to deal with this subject.*

In contrast God-fearing leaders are beloved by God and have an exalted station:

Verily God hath ordained knowledge for those who are inwardly and outwardly God-fearing .... Such men are, in the sight of God, truly learned ....[43] The Báb

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* This author has written a book about the role of religious leaders in the world, describing his conversations with Christian leaders about the Return of Christ. Refer to this website: www.TheKnowledgeOfGod.com, and the book: *Religious Leaders: A Secret Most Believers Do Not Know.*

The men of learning, in the sight of God, are those who have recognized Him (the Promised One) and have not hesitated to utter the word "yea".[44] Bahá'u'lláh

Consider how Balál, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude, whilst 'Abdu'lláh Ubayy, a leader among the learned, maliciously strove to oppose Him.[45] Bahá'u'lláh

In every age the religious leaders have been the cause of sectarian division among religions and separation between people. In the Bahá'í Faith, the tradition of having religious leaders has been completely abolished. All authority is held by elected bodies; and individuals, regardless of how knowledgeable or charismatic, have none. Thus there is unity among the believers, and the feeling of superiority is completely extinguished:

Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It hath become desolate.[46] Bahá'u'lláh

In *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the opposition of the religious leaders to the religion of God:

... these faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies .... Like the bats of darkness, they lift not their heads from their couch except to pursue the transient things of the world, and find no rest by night except as they labour to advance the aims of their sordid life. Immersed in their selfish schemes, they are oblivious of the divine Decree. In the day-time they strive with all their soul after worldly benefits, and in the night-season their sole occupation is to gratify their carnal desires.[47] Bahá'u'lláh

The interference of religious leaders in political affairs has, in all ages, caused disastrous consequences. This is especially the case in our present time when it is vital for humanity to recognize that they are all interconnected as members of one body. Instead of striving to inspire mutual understanding and cooperation between their respective followers, religious leaders, whether from the East or the West, have been the cause of prejudice and division. The Bahá'í Faith warns against such proceedings:

The duty of the divines and doctors of religion is the safeguarding and care of spiritual matters .... Whenever the divines ... interfered ... in the world of politics, the fires of sedition and discord burned high and the flames of hostility devoured the world.[48] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Those who are incapable of managing their own home and abode, who fail to nurture their own household and family, and who are heedless of friends and strangers alike, are intent on interfering in the important affairs of the country and the people.[49] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

We hope that such means may be provide for Persia that will result in the tranquility and security of all people; that justice and equity may prevail; and inequity and oppression vanish. We do not take part in political affairs; we desire the good of all people, and the progress of the nation; we serve the realm of good conduct and elevate the customs of Persia. We strive day and night, that God may instill a new spirit in the body of that land, that an extraordinary strength and vitality may be revealed in Persia and in the Persians.[50] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'u'lláh has often called upon religious leaders to investigate His claim and to proclaim the Cause of God. However, the majority of them have ignored or opposed His Call:*

> *The first to turn away from Us were the divines of the land ... their denial caused the people to turn away.*[51] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say, O concourse of divines! Be fair in your judgement, I adjure you by God. Produce then whatever proofs and testimonies ye possess .... Fear ye God and be not of them that well deserve the chastisement of God, the Lord of creation.*

> *This is the Day in which the Ocean of knowledge hath lifted up its Voice and hath brought forth its pearls .... The day is approaching when everything now discernible will have faded away and ye shall weep for having failed in your duty towards God.*[52] Bahá'u'lláh

> Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. Luke 17:1

The following warning about the Zoroastrian religious leaders is applicable to leaders of every religion:

> *The deeds of high priests have caused the people to be estranged from Almighty God. Instead of evincing self-denial they have given themselves up to inordinate desires and strayed far from the path of the Lord God. They have grievously erred, yet fondly imagine themselves to be treading the right path.*[53] Bahá'u'lláh

The purpose of knowledge is to know God. Those who are incapable of recognizing the greatness and glory of God in His Manifestations cannot be considered learned:

> *If they had embodied the essence of knowledge they would not have been veiled from the Revelation of God.*[54] The Báb

> *... these divines who are still doubtful of, and dispute about, the theological obscurities of their faith, yet claim to be the exponents of the subtleties of the law of God, and the expounders of the essential mysteries of His holy Word.*[55] Bahá'u'lláh

It has been easy for the divines and doctors of religion to pronounce a sentence of death; Imám Ḥusayn and the Báb were both martyred by such decrees. Religious authorities also played an important part in the martyrdom of Jesus. The despicable behavior of clerics and theologians has reached the highest level in our age. The following ḥadíth attributed to Muḥammad, is related in many Islamic sources. Bahá'u'lláh mentions a portion of this ḥadíth in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*,:

> A time will come when naught will remain of the Qur'án save its text, and of Islám nothing but its name; people will be called Muslims whereas they are far removed from Islám; their mosques will be flourishing but desolate; **the divines of that**

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* As mentioned, in the beginning of this book, hundreds of great divines accepted the Cause of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; albeit, such divines were a minority.

age will be the wickedest leaders on earth; they will be engaged in sedition which will return to themselves.* [56]

A great number of religious leaders prefer the comforts of this life to the bounties of the hereafter:

> *Such deeds and words have been solely instigated by leaders of religion, they that worship no God but their own desire, who bear allegiance to naught but gold, who are wrapt in the densest veils of learning, and who, enmeshed by its obscurities, are lost in the wilds of error.*[57] Bahá'u'lláh

The following verse relates to the people of our time:

> [After death] the weak [followers] will say to the haughty [religious leaders]: 'We were your followers. Can you now avert from us some portion of the wrath of God?' They [the leaders] will respond: 'if God had guided us, we would have surely guided you. [It is too late now] whether we be restless or patient, there is no refuge for us to flee to.' Qur'án 14:21

Then "Satan", as the representative of those religious leaders, speaks to the misled followers:

> When the Decree came to pass [God's promise was fulfilled], Satan said: God made a true promise; but I failed in my promise to you. I had no hold on you, except that I invited you and you accepted. Attach, then, the blame on yourselves, instead of me. I cannot lessen your cries and complaints, and you cannot lessen mine. Qur'án 14:22

The cries and lamenting of the deniers of God's religion, at the time of death and afterwards, has been confirmed in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh; inasmuch as the souls of those deniers suddenly become aware of the bounties and gifts they have forfeited:

> *The souls of the infidels, however, shall—and to this I bear witness—when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God.*[58] Bahá'u'lláh

All divine Scriptures have testified that the destiny of the believers in the eternal world is joyous; while, in contrast, the fate of the deniers is sorrowful and fearful. We have no power over these events. The Just Judge has so willed and decreed; we must not ignore such warnings from the Almighty God:

> *... they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed. Well is it with him that hath quaffed the choice and incorruptible wine of faith through the gracious favor and the manifold bounties of Him Who is the Lord of all Faiths ....*[59] Bahá'u'lláh

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* See www.askQur'án.ir/showthread.php?p=171401 for the original ḥadíth and its Persian translation. Bahá'u'lláh relates a portion of this ḥadíth in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 247–248.

Bahá'u'lláh has stated that if the veil of mystery were to be removed, the people of the world would be dumbfounded by the exalted station that has been decreed for the true believer.*

The following utterance explains the great difference between the destiny of the oppressors and that of the true believers:

> *The mysteries of man's physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and still remain unread. By the righteousness of God! Were they to be revealed, they would evoke such fear and sorrow that some would perish, while others would be so filled with gladness as to wish for death, and beseech, with unceasing longing, the one true God—exalted be His glory—to hasten their end.*
>
> *Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.*
>
> *As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds.*[60]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

The important lesson of the conversation (see Qur'án 14:21–2 above) between the "Satan" of the erring religious leaders and their followers is the importance of freedom of choice. The conversation shows that every person can recognize the Promised One with his own efforts, and not by accepting the word of others, especially not those who have imputed their own attributes—**misled and misleading**—to the followers of the Bahá'í Faith. These erring leaders have been referred to as "**Satan**" in the above verses; in other verses they have been called "**profligate**". Many of them have been writing books and pamphlets containing wicked and depraved allegations against the Faith of God. It is as if they are trying to prevent the Sun from shining with their mouths full of lies and calumny! Bahá'u'lláh has quoted a line of poem in reference to such people:

> These clumps of mud are intent
> at covering the brilliance of the sun

At the end of the conversation, the misleading leader says to the misled follower:

> Indeed I deny that which ye hath ascribed to me in my association with God.
>
> Qur'án 14:22

It is clear that, when it comes to their beliefs, people ascribe the highest ranks to their religious leaders, considering them as stars guiding their followers to the eternal Paradise. They seem to be unaware that these leaders are impelling them to the Hellfire of remoteness from their Creator.

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* *If the veil were lifted, and the full glory of the station of those that have turned wholly towards God, and have, in their love for Him, renounced the world, were made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 190.

God ends verse 14:22 with the promise of painful torment for the oppressors, i.e. those who cause others to deny the Promised One; and, in verse 14:23, He promises the Garden of Paradise to those who believe in the new Faith.

Bahá'u'lláh reveals to us that many people of our time are unbelievers, yet they claim to believe in the Unity of God. They worship their own vain imaginings and consider them truth; they turn to the thorn and call it a flower.[61] In this case, the unbeliever is someone who considers himself God; instead of communicating with his Creator, he is engaged in a conversation with himself; his hearer is his own self and desires, not his Creator. Consider the following verse:

> What thinkest thou? He who hath made a God of his passions, and whom God causeth to err through a knowledge, and whose ears and whose heart He hath sealed up, and over whose sight He hath cast a veil—who, after his rejection by God, shall guide such a one? Will ye not then be warned?
>
> Qur'án 45:23 (quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 214)

The above verse instructs us in two ways:

- Relying on our own desires without reliance on God is blasphemy and the cause of perversion.
- If knowledge is not accompanied by humility it will mislead rather than assist people.

Bahá'u'lláh addresses unworthy religious leaders with these words:

> *O YE THAT ARE FOOLISH, YET HAVE A NAME TO BE WISE! Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.*[62]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice.*[63]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

He addresses the Zoroastrian priests:

> *O high priests! Shake off your slumber, rouse yourselves from unconsciousness, incline your inner ears to the melody of the All-Sufficing; and conduct yourselves in a manner that beseemeth the Day of God Himself.*
>
> *Great is the station of him who hath in this Day perceived and become aware of the truth, and wretched is he who hath failed to comprehend the utterance of the Lord of wisdom, and to recognize the newly-arrived Friend in His new attire.*
>
> *Behold, the Ocean of true knowledge hath appeared and the Day-Star of wisdom shineth resplendent. Incline your ears to the Voice of the Eternal Lord of Utterance and purge yourselves from whatsoever is deemed unseemly, that ye may become worthy to gain admittance into the court of your Creator.*[64]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

The following verse teaches us that knowledge contaminated with arrogance is the cause of perversion; many religious leaders are boastful of their knowledge and are self-satisfied:

> When their Messenger came to them (the divines and doctors of religion) with clear proofs, they were content and happy with their own knowledge; but that which they mocked (in the end) did overtake them (they were punished).
> Qur'án 40:83

"To be content and happy with one's own knowledge" is the warp and woof of the veil of arrogance and pride. This veil prevents the divines from perceiving the truth; humility and meekness are needed to know God and His Manifestations:

> Only those believe in Our verses who when the verses are recited to them prostrate themselves and celebrate the praise of God, their Lord; there is no sign of haughtiness in them.
> Qur'án 32:15

> He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Psalms 25:9

> The Lord lifteth up the meek; he casteth the wicked down to the ground.
> Psalms 147:6

> *No path hath there been, nor shall one ever be, leading from the circle of earthly knowledge and learning to the realm of the Unseen.*[65]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Many believe that every Rabbi, Zoroastrian or Christian priest, a cardinal who dons a fine cloak, a divine who wears a cloak and learns Arabic or attains a religious jurisprudence degree from "Al-Azhar" or another such divinity school, is a loyal and chosen believer in God. This is a baseless fancy and vain imagining, which has always led to a general decline of faith and remoteness from God. How great is the number of the doctors of divinity who are exalted in the knowledge of the time, but have not obtained even a small share of the gems of faith and certitude. And how great is the number of people who have not entered any schools, but whose hearts are so pure and their spirits so radiant with the light of the love of God that they immediately recognize the Voice of God and, with heart and soul, bow before it.

> *The understanding of His words (God's) ... are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.*[66]
> Bahá'u'lláh

Many believers consider that the mark on the forehead of those who perform the prostrations of the obligatory prayers, their turbans, canes or rosaries, are signs of faith. Such believers are unaware that worship that is devoid of love for truth and justice is a sign of hypocrisy and dissimulation; it is not a mark of belief in God. For example, Some of the enemies of Imám Ḥusayn who engaged him in battle, fasted for three months each year and read the Qur'án day and night.[67]

> *Pay ye no heed to those who lay claim to knowledge, and fear not the greatness of their turbans, nor what their tongues utter, nor their clamorous cries, while they deny the outpourings of grace from this resplendent, this exalted, this most glorious Cloud.*[68]
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Indeed, the repudiation of the froward serveth but to proclaim this Faith and to spread the Cause of God and His Revelation throughout the world.*[69] Bahá'u'lláh

Can a more astonishing phenomenon than this be imagined—that a group of divines, doctors and mujtahids forsook every comfort, glory and bounty for the sake of their belief in this new Faith? They willingly accepted every misfortune, and in the end, with complete confidence, love and faith, sacrificed their lives for the Promised One of the age. Another group of divines, doctors of religion and mujtahids considered the murder of those believers to be one of their most important religious duties. What was the reason for this? Which of these two groups can be trusted, those who for the love of Truth forsook everything, or those who sat on the seat of glory and riches, and issued death sentences for those lovers of truth?

The home of faith and certitude is a pure heart filled with the love of God, not a mind full of worldly knowledge. The mind should be an instrument of guidance, not the goal of the journey. If the heart is contaminated by worldly attachments, then power, abundance and clarity of reason are of no avail; inasmuch as the light of love cannot penetrate a veil of prejudice and arrogance.

Let us move beyond the imitating followers and their leaders, and examine the deniers of God and eternal life. Why is it that some people, even after hearing proofs and reasons for the existence of God and the eternal world, refuse to believe? What is the root of their denial? The following verse answers this question:

> Those who believe not in the eternal life, it is their hearts that refuses to believe; they are a disdainful people. Qur'án 16:22

Our spirit's heart is like our physical heart. If it becomes hardened it is in need of healing. The disease affecting the deniers of God and eternal life is, in the first place, their arrogance.

Some people who have attained high degrees of academic education consider themselves not in need of belief in the Creator of the universe. Other simple-hearted people look upon these educated people as guides and leaders, and copy their ways, not realizing that God's home is the pure and humble hearts, not minds full of worldly knowledge. How often instead of bestowing purity, gentleness and generosity on the hearts, knowledge causes them to become hard and mean. People who are arrogant and hard-hearted are disparaged in the sight of God and they will have a miserable end:

> Verily the arrogant are not beloved by God. Qur'án 16:23

According to God's testimony, an ominous fate is awaiting such people:

> Wretched is then the abode of the boastful! Qur'án 16:29

The above verses, once again, remind us that humility is needed in connecting to God. How is it possible for the boastful heart to be admitted to the world of soul and spirit? Is a college education needed to acquire a humble heart?

Bahá'u'lláh states that the purpose of "knowledge"is admittance to the court of "Him Who is the Object of all Knowledge". In the same way, the goal of "the

lover" is attaining the presence of "the Beloved". The unbelieving learned who pass from this world are like travelers whose lives are spent on a journey without ever reaching the intended city or finding any signs of the Beloved.

Intellect and reason—the superiority of humans over animals

> *....the mind of man, which is the greatest of divine effulgences ....*[70] *Verily, mind is the supreme gift of God.*[71]
>
> 'Abdu'l-Bahá

> *We must, at all times, take refuge in God, lest the armies of ignorance prevail over the forces of knowledge and reason, and the hosts of idle fancy and doubt overcome the forces of certitude.*[72]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

The secret of the beauty of the world and of humanity lies in its diversity and variation. One source of this diversity in humanity is the freedom of belief and conscience, which is based on reason and thought. If there were no diversity, life would have no beauty and charm. Freedom without reason and understanding is insanity; and reason and understanding without freedom is servitude. Some people use their wealth to buy only calamity and evil; such wayward souls have so contaminated the tablet of their spirit with falsehood and idle fancy that no room is left to record anything else. Yet another group of people know the virtue and station of their spirit, and will never relinquish this precious gift of God, this pure and holy tablet, to ignorant and prejudiced people. They will not allow their eternal destiny to be written with the pen of arrogance and hypocrisy. Such believers will not engrave any words on the tablet of their spirit until they weigh them with the light of reason and understanding, and discover their "signs" and "proofs".

One of the mysteries of creation is that God has made a "sign" or "proof" for everything. He counsels us to pay attention to these "signs" in every aspect of life. The sun, the stars, the moon and heaven are all signs of the wisdom, power and beauty of the Creator—reflecting on them brings us nearer to God. Many people do not reflect and meditate on the "signs" of God; others ignore these "signs" and "proofs". According to the testimony of the Qur'án, such heedless people are deprived of the grace and mercy of God.

If there is a "sign" or "proof" for everything, it is befitting to ask "What is the first 'sign' of a true believer?" It is by abiding to the following principles:

- **Principle of freedom:** To condemn vain imitation that is contrary to freedom of belief and conscience.
- **Principle of reflection and reason:** The fair investigation of all matters, especially matters related to belief and conscience, as they have eternal consequences.

In our daily affairs, we respect the above two principles, which are the clearest signs of our humanity. For example, if someone accuses another of a wrongdoing, we ask "What is your proof? How do you know?" However, in matters of belief and religion, we often ignore this rule. For example, ask a hundred people who follow different religions: "For what reason did you believe in your faith? What signs and proofs testify to the truth of your religion?"

Observe how many of them have accepted their religion based on the principles of "**freedom**" and "**reflection and investigation**". You may find such believers number less than one percent. History teaches us that adherence to a religion has largely been inherited. Just as people inherit their physical traits, they also tend to inherit their religion, and this will continue to be so.

According to the verses of the Qur'án, to accept or believe in something after investigation is a sign of intellect and understanding; and to accept something without investigation shows a lack of intellect and understanding. (Qur'án 39:17–18) The foremost sign of being human and, therefore, superior to animals, is our power of reason and reflection. If we do not use these powers, then we will be lower than animals; inasmuch as animals do not use the powers they do not have, while we are not usinge the powers that we *do* have.

The following beautiful utterance of Bahá'u'lláh has been mentioned in this book several times:

> *The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead.*[73]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *In the world of humanity there is no greater bestowal than the gift of reason .... Reason is the balance of understanding; weigh, therefore, all things in the balance of reason.*[74]
>
> 'Abdu'l-Bahá

If we do not apply the power of thought, reason and understanding, which are divine gifts and bounties, we will be responsible in the sight of God. So great is this responsibility that we must not utter even one word without thought and reflection. The following warning of Jesus must be a guide to every believer:

> But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. Matthew 12:36

Ask the One who knows

Reflect on the meaning of the following verse that you may realize the importance of, and the need for, "seeking proofs" and "requesting signs"; and become aware of the consequences of negligence in using these criteria, which is the sign of being a human. The verse is a reference to the profligate people without conscience who, without any proof or reason, have considered the Bahá'í Faith a falsehood, and have written many books filled with wicked and depraved allegations against it. Many Muslims, without the slightest search or investigation, have accepted the words of these enemies of the Faith of God, and have considered and continue to consider the Bahá'ís "**an ignorant sect**".

> If an evil man come unto you with any news clear up the matter at once,* lest through ignorance ye harm others, and be speedily constrained to repent of what ye have done.
> Qur'án 49:6

Fásiq is used in this verse means evil-doer, one who deviates from the path of truth. This word has been used to refer to those who use lies to hide the truth of the religion of God from others. The learned among them often write inflammatory books and pamphlets. The divines and doctors of the Christian and Muslim faiths have written many books filled with malicious and depraved allegations against other religions, including the Bahá'í Faith. Their writings are a collection of lies and calumnies.

In the above verse, it is stated that if you hear any "**news**" from an evil person, ask for proof. Do not judge without investigating, in case you wrong someone through your own ignorance. This particularly applies to "news"of a new religion. Sadly, instead of asking the followers of that new religion for proof of its verity, most people seek advice from those who deny it—especially their own religious leaders. Then they simply accept the judgement of the latter without any independent investigation or reasoning.

It has been nearly two centuries since the news of the appearance of a great Messenger from Iran has reached the people of Iran and other parts of the world. What percentage of those who have heard the news have investigated or asked the Bahá'ís for proofs and signs? What percentage of the Muslim divines and doctors who continually read the Qur'án have followed the counsels of Qur'án 49:6? What percentage of them have asked "What are the proofs or signs of the truth of this **News**?"

During the time of the Báb nearly 400 of the greatest Muslim divines, who were foremost among the righteous, accepted the Báb. The degree of their purity and selflessness was such that they forsook all ease and accepted every misfortune. Many of these great leaders proved the truth of this Faith by sacrificing their lives for It. According to the command of the Qur'án, if a Muslim hears any **"news"** from the tongue of an evil person he must not accept that news without a thorough investigation. Rather he should ask the news-bringer for proofs and reasons. Reflect on the following questions: Why is the faith and testimony of these great divines, these heroes of the arena of righteousness, knowledge and wisdom, not sufficient to persuade the generality of the world's Muslims to carry out the command of the Qur'án? Is the testimony of millions of enlightened people who have, after much investigation and effort, testified to the truth of this **"Great Announcement"** and to the appearance of two Messengers from God, any less valuable than the testimony of self-interested and deceitful people?

The following verse has been revealed for Muslims of our time; it counsels them that they must search and investigate after hearing about **"the Great**

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* Tabayyanú ("investigate carefully, ask for clear proofs", e.g. Qur'án 4:94) is an important word that is used many times in the Qur'án. This is equivalent to the "independent investigation of truth" principle in the Bahá'í Faith.

Announcement". They should ask the believers in the new religion of God, for signs and proofs of that Announcement:

> Ask one who knows about Him. Qur'án 25:59

Who knows more about Him, the deniers of the new Faith, or the believers in the new Faith? Note that the above verse does not state that if you hear some news you should ask the local mullá or mujtahid about the truth or falsehood of it. It does not say you should ask the help of a scholar of ḥadíth or the Qur'án in Arabia or Iran, or to consult an interpretation of the Qur'án, such as "the great interpretation". God places the responsibility of investigating this **"Great Announcement"** upon the spirit of each person who hears about it. God commands him to inquire about the Promised One from believers in the new religion, seeking proofs and signs from "one who knows about Him".

The compassionate God has bestowed the capacity for the recognition of His Chosen Ones on all of His servants. It would be far removed from His justice and wisdom to bestow such a capacity, this great and peerless honor, only on scholars of the Arabic language, teachers of jurisprudence or philosophy, or the interpreters of the Qur'án. Anyone who desires the gift of faith must, instead of vain imitation of the divines or placing reliance on others, turn to the Almighty and Compassionate God, and seek His help:

> *That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth ....*[75] Bahá'u'lláh

Verbal disputation

Many people imagine that they can pressure others to accept the gift of faith, for instance, through verbal disputes. This is a baseless and vain imagining. God has always desired that we teach His Faith to those who seek and are thirsty for truth, with love and kindness, and through "**wisdom and utterance**":

> *The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past, and shall continue to be in the future!*[76] The Báb

> *Strive to make people aware of the truth with wise exhortation, and dispute not with anyone concerning the Cause of thy Lord, that His proof may be perfected unto all people.*[77] Bahá'u'lláh

The aim of disputation is to seek preference and superiority over others:

> *Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother.*[78] Bahá'u'lláh

Disputation is a competition in words, and, like sporting events, its aim is victory over the competitor. Such behavior is admirable in sporting competition. Should it be permissible in the arena of religion and faith?

The aim of a conversation or discussion is to arrive at the truth, and not for your ideas to prevail over others. To protect their rank and power, religious leaders of every faction and sect have taught their followers to view enlightened

people of a different persuasion as rivals and opposition, not as friends or co-workers aiming to achieve one common objective or purpose.

Even in the arena of politics, which is less associated with people's feelings, disputation among representatives of two opposing parties has not and does not lead to agreement or changing of minds. Have you ever seen or heard a politician, while debating with another politician of a different party, suddenly say: "I have been mistaken! You are right!"? Again, have you ever seen or heard a religious leader say to another leader: "I was mistaken! You are right!"? Why is disputation so common and acceptable among people? For the same reason that competition is common and acceptable in sports; people like to see one competitor receive a medal of honor and the other to be defeated. Human nature is molded with this feeling. In seeking after truth we must overcome a competitive tendency. Our goal is to discover the truth, not to compete; to know God, not to have a feeling of superiority and power over others.

The following verse also relates to the people of our time; it speaks of those who, without any knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith, merely based on what they have heard from the ignorant, engage in disputes with the followers of the Faith:

> There are those who dispute idly about (the Words of) God, without knowledge or guidance or an enlightened Book. Qur'án 31:20

Who else but the Messengers of God have the three great gifts of "knowledge, guidance and an enlightened Book"? And who else but the followers of the two Promised Ones of our age enjoy these gifts?

This prophesy has been fulfilled, inasmuch as, from the start, leaders of religion, especially among Muslims and Christians, have risen to dispute and contend with the Bahá'ís. They have sought to preserve their power and to hide the truth, they have warned their followers against any association with the Bahá'ís.

Heavenly Festival

Entering the eternal Paradise and the celestial Festival requires an invitation; without an invitation it is impossible for anyone to enter that boundless arena and to be near God.

If you were hosting a wedding celebration, would you invite strangers to your magnificent festivity? If you are unlikely to do this, why should God do it? Reflect on the following verse that has been repeated several times in this book:

God's promise to the seekers of the path of truth	**Condition for the fulfillment of the Promise**
Whoso maketh effort for Us, in Our way shall We assuredly guide him. Qur'án 29:69	For verily God is the supporter of them that do good. Qur'án 29:69

In the divine Scriptures, the conditions for the recognition of the Messengers of God have been mentioned many times. These conditions have always included a soul's "**quality of the heart**" and its actions. Never—not even

once—have issues of language, philosophy, religious jurisprudence, logic or schooling been mentioned as conditions.

> As to those that deny the life hereafter, their hearts causeth their denial; they are a people disdainful. Qur'án 16:22

> Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save ... our sins have hidden his face from you .... Isaiah 59:1–2

In the following utterance, Bahá'u'lláh counsels us about the need for good behavior, and informs us that "**righteousness**" is the condition for discovering the "secret" of this Great Day:

> *Cleanse yourselves, with the waters of righteousness, from greed and unseemly deeds, so that ye may discover the secret of the Day of Him Who the All-Sufficing.*[79] Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb also reminds us of this matter:

> *Therefore announce ye the Message unto those who manifest virtue and teach them the ways of the One True God, that haply they may comprehend.*[80] The Báb

In the Kitáb-i-Bayán the Báb reveals that God's Messenger "is, at all times, observing His people" and if at any time He finds, in the mirror of a heart, the capacity for belief, He, by the leave of God, makes Himself known unto him.[81]

Study the following invitation from God, revealed in pure Persian, and reflect on its meaning:

> *The first utterance of God is this: Approach ye Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing, and the Almighty with breasts sanctified from earthly desires and defilements, and hearts purified from every color in creation,. Bring whatsoever beseemeth His Day .... Hasten ye with pure hearts, that perchance ye may attain His presence and gain true knowledge of that which is worthy of your station .... Beholding His Face and attainment of an abiding felicity is possible through three means: a heart that is pure, eyes that are sanctified, and ears that are cleansed from whatever they have heard aforetime.*[82] Bahá'u'lláh

According to the above utterance, "Meeting" or "the Presence of" God is based on the fulfillment of three conditions:

- A heart sanctified from lies, hypocrisy and other impurities.
- Eyes sanctified from attraction to the outward transient affairs of the world.
- Ears sanctified from the "idle fancies" and "vain imaginings" prevalent among people.

Purity and sanctity are mentioned in other Scriptures:

> Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Matt 5:8

> ... without holiness no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14

The verses quoted above imply that no discrimination is allowed in the court of God; all are equal in the sight of God. Attainment of faith depends upon specific conditions; and anyone who fulfills those conditions will be adorned with the ornament of faith. Is it possible to imagine that Bahá'u'lláh would not

accept someone who, with heart and soul, responds to His Call? His grace and mercy were so great that He, with utmost respect, accepted even those who were prejudiced and ill-natured. Addressing one who had accepted the call of God, Bahá'u'lláh said:

> *We have heard thy voice and answered thee; We have witnessed thee turning unto Us, and have set Our face towards thee.*[83] Bahá'u'lláh

In a Tablet revealed to guide Bahá'ís regarding the manner of proclaiming "**the Great Announcement**", Bahá'u'lláh has written that they should "Be unrestrained as the wind" that blows over all regions, "be they inhabited or desolate". You should take this Call and this "**Great Announcement**" to all people; whoever accepts it will receive his reward, and whoever turns away will receive "none other than his own punishment."[84]

> And God calleth to the Abode of Peace (Dár as-Salám), and He guideth whom He will to the right way.* Qur'án 10:25

Nearly two centuries have passed since the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed their Causes in Shíráz and Baghdád. For our era, the Summons to the Abode of Peace is equal to an invitation to seek and investigate the signs and proofs of the Bahá'í Faith—the Faith that was proclaimed to the world in those two cities in AH 1260 and 1280 (CE 1844 and 1863) respectively. It is clear that many Muslims have heard the word "Bahá'í" and hearing the name equates to a call to seek and investigate. If the hearts of those who hear this Announcement are ready to believe, they will arise to follow the commandment of the Qur'án, which is a sign of a true Muslim, and will be assured that, by following these two conditions, they will attain the goal of their efforts:

- Continually seeking, searching and reflecting will illuminate their minds and spirits.
- Continually praying and beseeching God will be the cause of the outpouring of the clouds of divine bounty and bestowal.
- The light of the Sun, and the raining down of divine bounty and favors will prepare their hearts for the nurturing of the seeds of faith.

However, there are some whose spirits will remain eternally deprived of divine knowledge and bounty, and the honor of "Meeting God" because they have neglected their duty of:

- Accepting the Call of God with heart and soul
- Seeking God's assistance through prayer

> *A torment that none can avert is indeed destined for those who tarry after having received His irrefutable evidences.*[85] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Whosoever turneth away from the Beloved of the world, after clear testimonies and proofs were made manifest, shall receive his due punishment.*[86] Bahá'u'lláh

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* As we saw before, the title "Abode of Peace" has been used to refer to Baghdád and to Shíráz; the two cities that were the place of "the Proclamation" of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb: Darussalám: The home of Paradise, a title of the city of Baghdád, a title of the city of Damascus, also of Shíráz. 'Amíd Persian Dictionary, vol. 1, p. 909.

Say: In truth, abasement in this world is preferable to the torment of the life to come, inasmuch as the latter will endure eternally, whilst the former shall come to an end.[87] The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh states: "Lofty is the station of man!" This station is based on two pillars: The power of reason, and the gift of freedom and choice. Many people abandon the power of reason when choosing their eternal destiny, imagining that knowledge and thought have no part in the domain of faith and conscience. Such believers prefer the dark and small cage of imitation to the beautiful and glorious mansion of freedom. Instead of the journey towards a joyful heavenly Festival, which has been the utmost desire of the former generations, they waste their precious lives in a dark and narrow corner.

Our spirit is a bird of freedom, not an earthly creeping reptile. We have not appeared on this earth condemned and compelled; if we ignore the power of reason and reflection in choosing our eternal destiny, and set aside the great gifts of freedom of conscience and faith, we have abandoned our humanity.

Can an honor greater than being in "the Presence of God" be imagined? Can such an honor be acquired without effort or preparation of our soul and spirit? Our Creator has ordained the means of attaining every objective:

For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you.[88] Bahá'u'lláh

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Matthew 7:7

To obtain the gift of faith, one must continually beseech God and seek His aid. Bahá'u'lláh advises that "*At the dawn of every day he should commune with God*"[89] until, out of His grace and mercy, He discloses to him "*the secret of His Day*" (see below):

The light of the world-embracing Sun hath illumined the whole earth, and hath revived the dispirited and despondent world. Happy is the eye that hath observed and recognized. Beseech the All-Sufficing God to disclose the secret of His Day, and revive thee with a new life. He is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.[90] Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, I am near (unto them), and shall respond to the prayer of every suppliant. Let them, then, respond to My Summons and believe in Me, perchance they shall be guided into the right Path. Qur'án 2:186

God will not change the fate of any people, until they change it themselves. Qur'án 13:11

Qur'án 13:11 above is applicable to both a society and to a person. Are those who have no goal but to accumulate the treasures of the earth worthy of the gift of faith?

Those who have set their hearts on earthy riches, and pride themselves in earthly ranks, shall never be awakened from the slumber of negligence.[91] Bahá'u'lláh

It is not an easy task to recognize the Promised One of the age and enter "the valley of certitude and assurance". Sometimes years of perseverance and

striving is needed; it has always been this way, and will always be. It is impossible to attain this peerless honor, without continual search, goodly deeds and constant prayerfulness.

> And worship thy Lord that ye may attain unto certitude. Qur'án 15:99

The gift of faith is so precious that the Almighty and All-Knowing God places those who have confessed their faith in "the burning crucible of test". This will reveals their "hidden nature"; inasmuch as it is easy to profess faith in times of comfort and wealth, but only in the fiery crucible of hardship and misfortune will the purity and sincerity of belief be manifested.

> Do men think when they say 'We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof? Qur'án 29:2

> This is the way of faith and knowledge; this is God's unchanging method. "No change canst thou find in the way of God". (Qur'án 33:62, 48:23)

We shall know God through His Words

> *Verily, the pledge hath been fulfilled and the Promised One hath appeared. Happy is the man who hath hearkened and heeded his Lord, and woe betide him who hath erred and doubted.*[92] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Blessed is the soul that hath cast away his idle fancies and vain imaginings, and hath followed that which he hath been bidden in the Book of God, the Lord of all that hath been and shall be.*[93] Bahá'u'lláh

> *O servants! Forsake your own desires and seek that which I have desired for you.*[94] Bahá'u'lláh

> *No man's acts shall be acceptable in this Day unless he forsaketh mankind and all that men possess, and setteth his face towards the Omnipotent One.*[95] Bahá'u'lláh

> God bestoweth grace and mercy upon men; albeit most of the people are ungrateful. Qur'án 40:61

> *Say: The Pen, verily, counseleth you for the sake of God, and warneth you of the things which have escaped you in the days of your Lord, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate. He relateth to you tales of the former generations that haply ye may awaken and return unto God, the Almighty, the All-Praised.*[96] Bahá'u'lláh

> *This is the Day in which the sun is illumined and made radiant with the light of His Countenance .... But .... The divines of the age have intervened and hindered the eyes from beholding the light.*[97] Bahá'u'lláh

> *If in this great Day, the soil of human capacity and reality be not made green and verdant, there can be no doubt that it will forever remain deprived of the bounties of the All-Merciful, and will bring forth naught but the thorns of regret and despair.*[98] Bahá'u'lláh

> *Know ye that a servant's glory resideth in his nearness unto God, and that, unless he draweth nigh unto Him, naught else can ever profit him, even should he hold sway over the entire creation.*[99] Bahá'u'lláh

> *These few days of life are unworthy to cause anyone to be heedless of the one true God, or to act contrary to His good-pleasure.*[100] Bahá'u'lláh

Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire![101]
Bahá'u'lláh

The River of life hath, in this Day, been made manifest and the true Spirit hath appeared. Strive that ye may receive a portion of this boundless grace .... This blessed Day hath never had, nor will it ever have, any peer or likeness. Whatever is forfeited is impossible to acquire thereafter.[102]
Bahá'u'lláh

1 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 4–5.
2 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 13.
3 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 6–7.
4 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 90.
5 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 80
6 *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 78.
7 The Persian Bayán, pp. 116, 328.
8 The Persian Bayán, p. 204.
9 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 25 (Persian no. 10)
10 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 328. (prov. tr.)
11 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 91.
12 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 302. (prov. tr.)
13 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 140. (prov. tr.)
14 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 3–4.
15 The Persian Bayán, p. 277.
16 The Persian Bayán, p. 195.
17 Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 103
18 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 79.
19 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 255–256.
20 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, 106. (prov. tr.)
21 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 15. (prov. tr.)
22 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 7, pp. 219–220. (prov. tr.)
23 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 8, p. 117. (prov. tr.)
24 *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 245 (no. CLIII)
25 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 140. (prov. tr.)
26 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 257–258.
27 Biḥáru'l-Anvár Al-Jámi'at Lidurur al-'A'imat al-Aṭhár Vol. 24, p. 313.
28 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 236–237 (paragraph 267)
29 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 264. (prov. tr.)
30 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 258. (prov. tr.)
31 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 323. (prov. tr.)
32 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 426. (prov. tr.)
33 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 4, p. 393. (prov. tr.)
34 Asráru'l-Áthár, letter "Alif", p. 140. (prov. tr.)
35 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
36 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 217.
37 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pp. 194–195 (paragraph 214)
38 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 100.
39 The Persian Bayán, p. 324. (prov. tr.)
40 Majmú'iy-i-Munáját, Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 82. (prov. tr.)
41 Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 245–247 (no. CLIII)
42 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 107. (prov. tr.)

43 Qayyúmu'l-Asmá, p. 110. (prov. tr.)
44 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 44. (prov. tr.)
45 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 83 (no XXXV)
46 Cited in compilation "the Univesal House of Justice" https://www.bahai.org/r/692131120
47 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 225 (paragraph 252)
48 Risáliy-i-Siásyyih, pp. 20–21. (prov. tr.)
49 Risáliy-i-Siásyyih, p. 39. (prov. tr.)
50 Payám-i-Malikút, p. 112. (prov. tr.)
51 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, 'Andalíb, p. 148. (prov. tr.)
52 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 245.
53 The Bahá'í World, vol. XVIII, p. 968.
54 The Persian Bayán, p. 224. (prov. tr.)
55 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 83 (paragraph 90)
56 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 2, p. 109.
57 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 214 (paragraph 237)
58 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 170–171 (no. LXXXVI)
59 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 171 (no. LXXXVI)
60 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 345–346 (no. CLXV)
61 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, pp. 223, 232.
62 The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 30 (Persian no. 24)
63 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 182 (paragraph 199)
64 The Bahá'í World, vol. 18, p. 968.
65 Má'idiy-i-Ásmání, vol. 4, p. 172. (prov. tr.)
66 The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 221 (paragraph 233)
67 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 164.
68 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 226. (prov. tr.)
69 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 147.
70 *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 352.
71 *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 351.
72 Ḥadiqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 64. (prov. tr.)
73 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169.
74 Khatábát-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 2, p. 245. (prov. tr.)
75 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 193 (paragraph 213)
76 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 77.
77 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 217. (prov. tr.)
78 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 23–24 (Persian no. 5)
79 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 211. (prov. tr.)
80 *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 162.
81 Qámús-i-Íqán, vol. 3, p. 1406.
82 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 1, p. 211. (prov. tr.)
83 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 94. (prov. tr.)
84 *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 339 (no. CLXI)
85 La'áliu'l-Ḥikmat, vol. 1, p. 69. (prov. tr.)
86 Asráru'l-Áthár, letter "alif", p. 21. (prov. tr.)
87 Ẓuhúru'l-Ḥaqq, p. 405. (prov. tr.)
88 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 51 (Persian no. 80)
89 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 194 (paragraph 214)
90 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 287. (prov. tr.)
91 Áyát-i-Eláhí, vol. 2, p. 380. (prov. tr.)
92 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, 'Andalíb, p. 122. (prov. tr.)
93 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, printed in Egypt, p. 219. (prov. tr.)

94 *The Tabernacle of Unity*, p. 41 (grid 4.11)
95 Quoted in 'God Passes By', p 211.
96 Muḥáḍirát. Vol 3, p. 166. (prov. tr.)
97 Quoted in Payám-i-Bahá'í, September 2011, p. 3. (prov. tr.)
98 Ḥadíqiy-i-'Irfán, p. 50. (prov. tr.)
99 *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 187.
100 Asráru'l-Áthár, letter "alif", p. 200. (prov. tr.)
101 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 48 (Persian no. 75)
102 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh, 'Andalíb, p. 118. (prov. tr.)

28
Summary of "the Great Puzzle" of the Qur'án

The bounties of God are countless. Qur'án 16:18

Man is truly ungrateful. Qur'án 22:66

At the conclusion of this book, it is befitting to pause and review the promises of the Qur'án regarding the Promised One of our time. This review will make it easier to see the solution to "the Great Announcement":

1. The primary and common meaning of "Khátam an-Nabyín" is "the Seal of the Prophets", not the last Messenger.
2. Like the Muslims with their interpretation of "Khátam an-Nabyín", the followers of previous religions have faced—and continue to face—challenges in accepting a new Messenger.
3. God has warned us to learn from the behavior and the fate of former nations and religions.
4. Qur'anic verses show that all religions have a fixed term, including Islám, which is not exempted from the rule: "For every ummah there is a fixed term".
5. Qur'anic verses show that the spiritual life of Islám will eventually come to an end, and a new era in human spiritual life will begin.
6. Many verses of the Qur'án refer to the appearance of Messengers after Muḥammad.
7. Qur'anic verses prophesy the end of the spiritual life of Islám exactly six times; all those verses point to the year AH 1260.
8. The Promise of the Qur'án and other divine Scriptures has been fulfilled. On the date prophesied, i.e. AH 1260, God sent a new Messenger titled, the Báb (the Gate), the Exalted Lord (Rabb al-A'lá), for the guidance of humanity.
9. The Qur'án repeatedly gives the glad-tidings of the future appearance of a Promised One referred to as Rabb ("Lord").
10. Three verses connect the year of the manifestation to the number 9 (ba'da ḥín, meaning "after ḥín" 68, i.e. 69).
11. Nine years after the appearance of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His station, by the same title, Rabb (" Lord")—from God.
12. The Qur'án prophesies many events in the history of the Bahá'í Faith.
13. The promise of the appearance of the two Messengers of our time is the most important and the most joyous promise bestowed on humanity, by the compassionate God, not only in the Qur'án but also in other heavenly Scriptures.
14. The Qur'án repeatedly prophesies the appearance of two Messengers named Dhikr ("Remembrance"), and an-Naba' al-'Aẓím ("the Great Announcement").
15. The Báb often refers to Himself as Dhikr ("Remembrance"), and Bahá'u'lláh calls Himself and His Revelation an-Naba' al-'Aẓím ("the Great Announcement").

16. According to verses of the Qur'án, the Resurrection occurs with the Rise of the Qá'im.
17. A physical Resurrection in the world is incompatible with the plan of God; inasmuch as human beings lose the great gift of freedom of choice.
18. This physical world is the arena of test; God keeps the mystery of the eternal world hidden, so that people may manifest their inner qualities without fear.
19. The gift of faith is in God's hands; the magnet of this peerless and eternal gift consists of a pure spirit, goodly deeds, prayer and supplication to the court of the Almighty God.
20. The greatest and clearest proof of the truth of the Messengers is their Words and Books. To recognize the Bahá'í Faith, we must read its heavenly Scriptures and weigh them in the balance of reason.
21. Despite encountering intense dangers, hundreds of great divines and doctors of Islám—in Iran, in Arab-speaking and in other Islamic countries—have testified to the majesty and magnificence of the Bahá'í Scriptures, and considered them to be the Words of God.
22. To know the religion of God it is necessary to investigate, not imitate. God has decreed a severe penalty for imitators, and religious leaders who encourage people to imitate.
23. To accept or reject the Promised One of the age is the most important decision any person must face in this world. To ignore the Message of the Bahá'í Faith is the same as denying the two Promised Ones of God Who have been sent for our guidance.
24. According to God's testimony, the eternal destiny of every human being is linked to the acceptance or denial of the Promised One of the age.
25. The only way to recognize the Messengers of God is through search and investigation. To strive and search in this path result in the greatest rewards; and to neglect this responsibility leads to eternal deprivation and regret.

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To become knowledgeable about the fulfillment of God's promise concerning **an-Naba' al-'Aẓím** (**"the Great Announcement"**)—a promise repeated throughout the Qur'án—read this book several times and reflect on the glad-tidings of the appearance of the two Promised Ones of our era, so that the mysteries of the Qur'anic promise may become clear and evident to you, as the light of the day. The more you study the related verses and the more you consider the pieces of the Puzzle of the Qur'án, the clearer becomes the great image of the Puzzle. To be able to judge fairly, answer the following question: "For what reason have I accepted Islám? Is my reason greater or stronger than what has been described in ***Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur'án***"?

If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?[1] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: If ye turn away, God is All-Sufficient unto me. Qur'án 9:129

Is it the duty of the Messengers but to deliver the clear Message? Qur'án 16:35

> We have indeed raised up a Messenger unto every ummah .... Then journey through the earth and see what the end of those who repudiated [their Messengers] was. Qur'án 16:36

In a letter to seekers of Truth, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the conditions for the recognition of the Promised One. In the beginning of the letter He states that the path to attaining to "all the limitless stations of knowledge" and the acquisition of "the ultimate fruit of human existence" is the recognition and belief in the Messengers of God:

> *This is abiding felicity and the essence thereof, and the meaning of salvation, both its source and its acme.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

Living in this world without recognizing the latest Messenger of God is the greatest loss; inasmuch as the only thing of value we may gain in this life is the good-pleasure of our Creator, which is impossible to earn without faith in His Messenger.

Is it difficult to recognize God's Messengers? Bahá'u'lláh reveals that God sends His Messengers with such proofs and signs that others:

> *[Others] are powerless to produce their like, leaving no room for anyone to turn aside or to protest.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

Then in the same letter, Bahá'u'lláh reminds us that if proofs of the truth of the Messengers were not clear, God's proofs and reasons would not be complete.[4] However, the recognition of God's Messengers is easy and His proofs and signs are complete provided that we judge with a true Balance. Is it possible to distinguish diamond from glass without a true balance? Bahá'u'lláh explains that "that Sun of Oneness and King of Truth" must be recognized by His own radiance; inasmuch as "His proofs are manifest and radiant through His own Self":

> *The proof of the rising of the Sun is its own light that shineth resplendent from the Sun itself.*[5] Bahá'u'lláh

Then He explains that every person is responsible for recognizing the "Manifestation of God" without paying attention to the beliefs or denials of others:

> *The repudiation and denial of others, or their recognition and belief, have never been and will never constitute a testimony and proof for any soul.*[6] Bahá'u'lláh

Once again, He reminds us that in order to recognize the religion of God we must look to the reality of the Manifestation, and not to His garment. If we look at the garment—i.e. name or outward appearance—we will not recognize the Promised One:

> *Regard thou a man, wert thou to truly know him, thou wouldst recognize him in whatever garment thou mayest see him.*[7] Bahá'u'lláh

At the end of the Letter, He states:

> *This is My best counsel unto you, were ye to turn unto it.*[8] Bahá'u'lláh

We shall know God through His Words

O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?[9] Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of God, We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth.[10] The Báb

They will ask Thee to inform them [saying]: Is He the Truth [is He the Promised One of God]? Say: Yea, by my Lord! He is the true One, and ye cannot prevent Him [stop the spread of His Cause]. Qur'án 10:53

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.[11] Bahá'u'lláh

One of the greatest gifts of God to us is our freedom of conscience and belief. If we do not accept the Call of God, then we have wronged ourselves; inasmuch as God is in no need of our belief:

Say: O people! The Truth hath come to you from your Lord; then whosoever is guided [to the straight Path] is guided for his own good, and whosoever is misled, it is at his own loss. Qur'án 10:108

Clear proofs hath come to you from your Lord; then whosoever hath [inner] eyes, it is for his own good, and whosoever is bereft of vision, it is to his own loss. Qur'án 6:104

O PEOPLE of the Qur'án! Ye are as nothing unless ye submit unto the Remembrance of God and unto this Book. If ye follow the Cause of God, We will forgive you your sins, and if ye turn aside from Our command, We will, in truth, condemn your souls in Our Book, unto the Most Great Fire. We, verily, do not deal unjustly with men ....[12] The Báb

Be not content with idle fancy; turn unto the Self-Subsisting Lord, Him Who hath come with might and sovereignty.[13] Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O people! that which ye possess shall not profit you .... He, verily, summoneth you for the sake of God; unto this beareth witness every man of equity and perception. Cleave ye to your own corrupt desires, and cast ye away the precepts of your Lord, the Most Glorious? This, verily, is but grievous injustice. The day is approaching when ye shall weep for having failed in your duty towards God, and none shall be found to befriend or help you.[14] Bahá'u'lláh

Wherefore have ye abandoned your God, and clung to your desires? Open ye your eyes, that perchance ye may recognize your Lord, the Unconstrained! Thus counseleth you the tongue of Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.[15] Bahá'u'lláh

Whatever hath been recorded and lay concealed in all the Books of God hath, in this Day, been made manifest and evident. No excuse is left for anyone, unless he should speak from his own fancies and desires.[16] Bahá'u'lláh

While there is yet time, strive with heart and soul to appreciate the value of this blessing .... that ye may behold a new world, and step into the blessed realm of the spirit.[17] Bahá'u'lláh

1 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 131.
2 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 313. (prov. tr.)
3 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 312. (prov. tr.)
4 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 312.
5 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 314. (prov. tr.)
6 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 314. (prov. tr.)
7 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 314. (prov. tr.)
8 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakih, printed in Egypt, p. 315. (prov. tr.)
9 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 131.
10 *Selection from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 57.
11 *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11 (Arabic no. 31)
12 *Selection from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 61.
13 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 7, p. 11. (prov. tr.)
14 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 353. (prov. tr.)
15 Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, vol. 1, p. 353. (prov. tr.)
16 Majmú'iy-i-Mubárakih Az Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá, pp. 288–289. (prov. tr.)
17 Asráru'l-Áthár, vol. 5, p. 326. (prov. tr.)

Appendices

This section consists of 3 appendices:

1. **Death (*ajal*) of a community (*ummah*)**
2. **19 and the Qur'án according to Rashíd Khalífah**
3. **Books by the author**

Appendix 1
Death (*ajal*) of a community (*ummah*)

Sometimes, a misinterpretation of the Word of God can have immeasurable consequences. It is for this reason that our Creator asks us to always ponder and reflect, and accept any words only after great search and investigation.

> *They have turned away from all the verses of God and have taken a single letter of the Book as proof and argument for that which they possess.*[1] Bahá'u'lláh

> *With one name and one word the Faith of Islám was rendered weak and brought to naught.*[2] Bahá'u'lláh

> Most people are heedless and busy themselves with their vain imaginings. How often will they, for the sake of a single letter, deprive themselves of the *Mother Book, and, for a mere drop, turn away from the Most Great Ocean.*[3] Bahá'u'lláh

Why is the meaning of one word so important? Because an incredible power is hidden in some words. The word "king" hindered Jews from accepting Jesus; the word "only" in the utterance of Jesus prevented Christians from belief in Muḥammad; the powerful word in our time is khátam ("seal").

Sometimes, one word has the power to cause a world war. It has been said that the erroneous translation of one Japanese word caused the atomic bomb to be dropped on Japan. In our ear, the word khátam ("seal") has covered the eyes of millions of Muslims in the world like a veil. Consider the following verses:

> Then We sent Our Messengers, one after another. Whenever a Messenger came to an ummah they treated him as a liar. Qur'án 23:44

> Thus have We sent thee to an ummah before whom there were other ummahs. Qur'án 13:30

Before the appearance of Muḥammad, many other ummahs ("nations") had existed in the world. According to the testimony of the Qur'án, God had sent a Messenger to each of those. It is appropriate to ask "How and for what reason should the chain of these Messengers and ummahs suddenly end with the appearance of Muḥammad and the Muslim ummah?"

Life on earth may continue for thousands of millions of years into the future. It is difficult to even imagine the changes that will occur in the world in one hundred years time. Why would God's bountiful dealings with humanity be halted, and the chain of His Messengers end in Arabia in a particular time? For what reason should the Muslim ummah be the last? What change had occurred in the world or in human nature that would cause the abolition or reversal of the practice and ancient promises of God? Reflect on the following verses of the Qur'án:

Every ummah has a set life (ajal)	Qur'án 10:49, 7:34
Every ummah has a Messenger	Qur'án 10:47
Every age (ajal) has a Book.	Qur'án 13:38

No ummah has been left without a Warner. Qur'án 35:24

No change canst thou find in the way of God. Qur'án 48:23, 33:62

Why should God's way suddenly change in the year CE 612,* the time of the appearance of Islám? What reason can be found for this change in God's system? How can we answer this question except with the balance of reason? God has always called us to reflect and to reason:

Those who are endued with understanding take heed. Qur'án 13:19

These questions demand answers. What is the difference between the people of our time and former generations that their spiritual life should undergo no further development, and that they should no longer need new laws? What change has occurred in the nature of civilization that should change the former practice of God?

The following verses of Sura 7 A'ráf ("The Heights") clearly confirm and emphasize God's eternal method—i.e. the sending of new Messengers:

> Every ummah hath a fixed life, and end (ajal). When their end is come, they cannot hasten or delay it even by one hour. O children of Adam! Surely Messengers will come to you from among yourselves, who recite to you My verses; whosoever is virtuous and does good work, shall not be overtaken by fear nor put to grief.† Qur'án 7:34–35

What do the above verses teach us?

1. **Every ummah has a pre-ordained lifetime.**

   Why should every ummah have a fixed lifetime, a finite life? Because, just like the life of every member of an ummah, the life of an ummah eventually decays and needs to be renewed.

2. **When their end is reached, they cannot hasten nor delay it, even by one hour.**

   Why does the ajal ("end") of an ummah ("nation") occur at a specific and pre-determined time? Just as the life of each person ends according to a law of nature, the life of an ummah also ends in the same way.

3. **O children of Adam! Whenever Messengers come to you from among yourselves, and surely they will come, they will recite to you My verses.**

   Why are Messengers sent by God after the end of each ummah to recite God's verses to people? Because the compassionate God does not abandon His people in the depths of ignorance and heedlessness. Whenever the life

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* Ten years before the Hijrah.

† The following verse teaches the same concept as 7:34–35, but it applies to the past: *We sent a Messenger from among yourselves that He may recite Our verses to you and purify you.* Qur'án 2:151

of a religion ends, God sends a new Messenger to recite God's verses to them and bestow a new life on them.

See how clear the contents of these verses are! First, God informs us of the death of every ummah; then He speaks of the dispatch of Messengers to bestow new life on those ummahs. The matter cannot be any clearer.

4. **Whosoever is virtuous and does good works shall not be overtaken by fear or put to grief.**

Why should virtuous people not have any fear or sadness? At the time of the appearance of the new Messengers of God, such people will begin to search and investigate with courage and strength, and will discover the truth. God always guides the righteous to the path of Truth, and makes His new Manifestation known to them.

The above verses (7:34-35) clearly confirm one another; in the beginning the verses speak of the end of the life of each ummah; then, they speak of the coming of Messengers at the end of every era. The end of the life or era of each ummah occurs without exceptions, and this is an unchanging decree of God. This rule is so fixed and exact that, according to the Words of God, its occurrence cannot be hastened nor delayed, even by one hour. For this reason, as we shall see, some of the heavenly Scriptures, such as the Bible or the Qur'án, refer to the time of the start of a new religion or ummah as "the Hour".

God has left no room for doubt or hesitation for any Muslim in the verses of the Qur'án. The clause "For each ummah there is a term limit (ajal)" is so clear and strong that it leaves no room for interpretation. All words have a clear and definite meaning: all ummahs are subject to the universal law. Since Muslims are also an ummah, this universal law also applies to them.

The expression "end of time" (ajal in Arabic) has also been used in the Bible. In one instance the Apostles ask Jesus:

> Tell us, when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? Matthew 24:3

In answer to this question, Jesus gives signs very consistent with those given in the verses of the Qur'án.

To investigate further, let us study the meanings of *ajal*. According to the "Sukhan" dictionary:

- A fixed time or a decreed duration
- Respite, grace period
- The maximum (end) of something
- The end of the lifetime, death, the time of death

Therefore, the meanings of *ajal* in verse 7:34 are:

- A fixed period that has been given to every ummah, including Muslims
- A grace period given to every ummah
- The end of the age (life) of every ummah

The third meaning of *ajal* completely conforms to the Biblical expression "end of age".

Verse 7:35 confirms the appearance of new Messengers. It is clear that those whose life conforms to the Will of God, are free from religious prejudices and are inclined to search and investigate with fairness, they will never turn away from the truth. Therefore, they should not be fearful or anxious since God is always their friend and helper.

Another point is that the above verses are addressed to all humanity ("O children of Adam!")—this alludes to the universal nature of the religions after Islám. A Messenger in the past has come for each group of people of the world, i.e. for each ummah. However, God's plan after Muḥammad is for all ummahs to be united. This is now possible since all the nations of the world are connected to each other as the members of one body.

The death of faith and belief in the hearts of people

There are many similarities between "the death (ajal) of men" and "the death of an ummah". When a human dies the spirit is disassociated from the body and returns to God. In the same way, with the death of an ummah, God's spirit of guidance is separated from that ummah and returns to God. Rituals and ceremonies are the body of religion; truth, honesty, love and faith in God are the spirit of religion. It is God's Will that, for a fixed time, people grow and develop under the shadow of the body of religion, and are inspired by the light of its delightful spirit.

However, after the passing of a time, old age sets in and strength is sapped from the spirit of religion. Then God's spirit is separated from the body of the old Faith and transferred to the body of a new religion. Jesus told His followers **"I will be with you always, to the end of the age."** (Matthew 28:20) This means that at the end of the age or the end of an ummah, Jesus' connection with His followers ceases. The appearance of Islám was contemporaneous with the ajal ("death") of the Christian ummah, that is the end of the Christian age. The appearance of the Bahá'í Faith announced the end of the Muslim ummah, and the completion of the age of Islám. These changes and transitions are according to Divine wisdom and decree; it has always been this way and always will be.

Bahá'u'lláh revealed that Islám, God's religion for the time of Muḥammad, has weakened, so much so that the body of that blessed religion has fallen upon the dust in view of the people. Each man is robbing a member of that body and no one is able to resist the perpetrators, or even question their actions. Then He states:

> *A hundred thousand eyes are needed to weep for the Radiant Nation. Beseech God to aid His religion.*[4]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> *Say: Are ye numbered among the dead? Yea, by Him Who is My Lord! Were there a breath of life within you, ye would have hearkened to the Voice of your Lord and set your faces in His direction.*[5]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh

> Oh Lord! Verily, My people (Muslims) have turned away from this Qur'án (ignore its laws) Qur'án 25:30

From what have Muslims turned away? The body of Islám or its spirit? Many beautiful mosques have been built throughout the world. The Qur'án has been translated into hundreds of languages, and made available even to the poorest Muslims. Large universities have been established throughout the world to teach and propagate the Qur'án. The number of students who are studying in these universities, whether in Islamic or Christian countries, has increased many hundred-fold. Note how extensive are the number of commentaries and other books that have been written about the Qur'án! What, then, is the problem? The problem is that the spirit of Islám has left the world. The effect of this absence is to such a degree that, in our age, hundreds of thousands of Muslims are fighting and killing each other. In recent years, tens of thousands of Muslims, including women and children, have been killed by their co-religionists, in homes, streets, bazars, schools and universities. Over 20,000 Bahá'ís, from suckling babes to the sick and aged, have been killed by Muslims, in the most gruesome and tragic ways. Do we really need any more proofs of the fulfillment of the Qur'anic prophesy in verse 25:30?

> Verily a day is fast approaching when, among you, nothing shall be more hidden that the truth ... and nothing more common than falsehood .... None shall remain of it (Islám) among them (Muslims) save its name ....[6] Imám 'Alí

The following ḥadíth from Muḥammad, is consistent with both verse 25:30 and the utterance of Imám 'Alí in Nahju'l-Balágḥah:

> A time will come when naught will remain of the Qur'án save its text, and of Islám nothing but its name. People will be called Muslims whereas they are far remote from Islám. Their Mosques will be flourishing but will be desolate. The divines of that age will be the wickedest leaders on earth. They will be engaged in sedition which will return to themselves.*[7]

> Divines see visions that lie, they tell dreams that are false. They give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for the lack of a shepherd. My anger burns against the shepherds and I will punish the leaders, for the Lord Almighty will care for his flock .... Zechariah 10:2–3

> But in that day .... O my people, your guides lead you astray .... Isaiah 3:7, 12

In Jewish and Christian Scriptures, just as in the Qur'án, the spiritual decline of the people of our age, or "the death of an ummah" has been explicitly prophesied:

> At that time many will turn away from the faith .... Matthew 24:10

How strange it is that the generality of mankind continues to worship the old and worn out body of former religions, deprived of the young body of the new religion of God, and the light of its strong and fresh spirit. Reflect on the meaning of the following verse:

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* Baha'u'llah relates a part of this Ḥadíth in the Book of Certitude, pp. 247–248.

> He is the One Who created ye from clay, then decreed an appointed term [for you]. **And another term is specified with Him; and yet ye doubt.** Qur'án 6:2

About which ajal ("fixed term") are the people in doubt? The fixed term of the ummah, meaning:

> For every ummah there is a fixed term. Qur'án 7:34, 10:49

People have always refused to accept a new religion, even though it is a more advanced guide than the one they already have, because they have imitated the beliefs of others, especially their religious leaders. They have always responded:

> Verily we found our fathers with a faith, and verily, in their footsteps we follow. Say: What! Even if I bring you a religion, a better guide than what ye possess? Qur'án 43:23–24

There are many similarities between the life of a "person" and the life of an ummah ("nation")". They both:

- Are born at a specific time.
- Growth is gradual.
- Pass through the stages of childhood, maturity, youth, and old age.
- Encounter illness, dangers and abuse.
- Need nourishment and support (strengthening).
- Become contaminated by error and sin.
- Grow old and lose their former strength.
- Eventually face "certain death".
- Are inclined to deny their "certain death".
- Such denial creates many difficulties, for instance people refuse to prepare their spirit to accept the new life, imagining their life in their current state is permanent.
- It is difficult for people to understand the meaning of ajal ("fixed time") or "death"; they think "death" is the same as non-existence; whereas "death" is the transfer of the spirit from one condition to another. Our true existence is our spirit, not our body—only our body dies. Similarly, when a religion "dies", "the spirit of God" is transferred from that religion to a new one. The same light of God that radiated from Islám was transferred to the Bahá'í Faith. The same spirit has been, and continues to be, fundamental to all religions. Those who accept the new religion find a new life; inasmuch as it is not possible to acquire light from a dark (tarnished) mirror. The same light that was in Christ appeared in Muḥammad; and again, the same light is manifested in the two Promised Onesof our age: The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

1 Kitáb-i-Badí', p. 66. (prov. tr.)
2 Ishráqát va Chand Lawḥ-i-Dígar, p. 222. (prov. tr.)
3 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh ('Andalíb), p. 158. (prov. tr.)
4 Majmú'iy-i-Alwáḥ-i-Mubárakeh ('Andalíb), p. 180. (prov. tr.)
5 Ḥadíqiy-i-Irfán, p. 88. (prov. tr.)
6 Durj-i-Li'álí, p. 96.
7 Biḥáru'l-Anvár, vol. 2, p. 109.

Appendix 2
19 and the Qur'án
according to Rashíd Khalífah

Dr Rashíd Khalífah, a former Imám of Masjid Tucson, Arizona, has written a few books regarding the importance of the number 19 in the holy Qur'án. In one book* he has explained, in detail, his discoveries; and at the end of the book he has listed 43 cases of the connections between the number 19 and the verses of the Qur'án. In this appendix, we content ourselves with a few of those cases:

1. The first verse of the Qur'án (Bismi'lláh ar-Raḥmán ar-Raḥím) consists of 19 consonant letters.
    a) Bism ("in the name of") occurs in the Qur'án 19 times = 19 × 1.
    b) Alláh occurs in the Qur'án 2,698 times = 19 × 142.
    c) Raḥmán occurs in the Qur'án 57 times = 19 × 3.
    d) Raḥím occurs in the Qur'án 114 times = 19 × 6.
    e) Sum of the above multiplication factors = 1 + 142 + 3 + 6 = 152 = 19 × 8.
    f) Each of the above frequency of occurrences, that is 19, 2,698, 57 & 114, corresponds to the numerical value of one of God's names.
2. The Qur'án has 114 chapters, or 6 × 19.
3. First chapter revealed (traditional no. 96) consists of 19 verses.
    a) This chapter is the 19th from the end of the Qur'án.
    b) This chapter consists of 304 letters = 19 × 16
4. Second revelation (68:1–9) is 38 words = 19 × 2.
5. Third revelation (73:1–10) is 57 words = 19 × 3.
6. Fourth revelation (74:1–30) ends with tis'ata 'ashara ("nine ten"), ie. 19.
7. Last chapter revealed (traditional no. 110) consists of 19 words, and the first verse consists of 19 letters.

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* Rashíd Khalífa, *The Computer Speaks: God's Message to the World.*

Appendix 3
Books by the author

www.GlobalPerspective.org

Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Faith: God's Greatest Gift to Humankind, 160 pages, SC, $3[1]
Bahá'u'lláh: the One Promised in all Scriptures, 235 pages, SC $3
On Wings of Destiny, 274 pages, SC, $4
One God, Many Faiths; One Garden, Many Flowers, 290 pages, HC, $12
Choosing Your Destiny, 375 pages, HC, $12

Biblical prophecies regarding the Second Advent and their fulfillment by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh

I Shall Come Again, 522 pages, HC, $25

Lord of Lords, 634 pages, HC, $25

King of Kings, 510 pages, HC, $25

Come Now, Let Us Reason Together, 286 pages, SC, $6

The Glory of the Father, 329 pages, HC, $12

The Greatest News, 166 pages, SC, $3

How to teach the Faith?

Teaching: The Crown of Immortal Glory, 452 pages, SC, $20

Proclaim the Most Great Name, 104 pages, SC, $4

The Magnet of Divine Blessings (a compilation of Sacred Writings), 419 pages, SC, $6

The afterlife

The Glorious Journey to God, 258 pages, SC, $12

Unto God Shall We Return, 164 pages, SC, $6

Death: The Door to Heaven, 182 pages, SC, $3

A Messenger of Joy, 112 pages, SC, $6

Near death vision

A Glimpse of Paradise (DVD), 104 minutes, $12
(An American lady is guided to become a Bahá'í while she was clinically dead.)

Knowing and loving God

God's 19 Great Little Tranquilizers, 62 pages, SC, $1.25

The Spiritual Design of Creation, 299 pages, HC, $12

For Muslims

Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, 292 pages, HC, $12
(Disproves the belief that Muḥammad is the last Prophet.)

Prayers

Bahá'í Prayers, SC, 230 pages, $3

Prayers from the Báb, 150 pages, SC, $3

Books on Amazon.com

Kindle Direct Publishing prints the following print-on-demand books by **Hushidar Motlagh**:

Bahá'í Proofs, 110 pages, $4.76
By My Fruits You Shall Know Me, 253 pages, $7.26
Christ Has Come!, 154 pages, $5
Christians are Invited to the Banquet of Heaven, 32 pages, $4
Do You Believe in Jesus or in Bible Scholars?, 18 pages, $4
Do You Know Who You Really Are?, 37 pages, $4
Does Your Fish Bowl Need Water?, 31 pages, $4
The Evidence for Jesus (The Glory of the Son), 91 pages, $4
The Greatest Lesson in History, 58 pages, $4
Hath the Hour Come?, 41 pages, $4
Heaven's Most Glorious Gift, 149 pages, $5
I Shall Come Like a Thief, 70 pages, $4
Identical Prophecies of the Bible and the Qur'án, 172 pages, $4.42.
If this is a New Day, Why Are People Sleeping?, 23 pages, $4
In the Clouds of Glory, 224 pages, $7
Islamic Prophecies, 32 pages, $4
Knowing God by His Word, 148 pages, $5
The Knowledge of God: Knowing and Loving God, 73 pages, $3:58
Muḥammad: The Spirit Who Glorified Jesus, 618 pages, $14
Mysteries of the Bible, 39 pages, $4
One Way!, 47 pages, $4
Prophecy: The Obstacle that Prevents People from Knowing Their Redeemer, 33 pages, $3.58
The Role of Religious Leaders in the Destiny Humankind, 89 pages, $3.58
Seize Thy Chance, 74 pages, $4
The Spiritual Design of Creation, 299 pages, $12
Spiritual Solution to Adversity, 56 pages, $4
The Standards of Being a Bahá'í, 41 pages, $4
Thy Kingdom Come, 45 pages, $4
Who Needs Religion?, 120 pages, $4
Why Was 1844 the Most Critical Time in History?, 28 pages, $3.58
Will Jesus Come from the Sky or as a Thief?, 206 pages, $6

1 HC = hard cover; SC = soft cover.

The Báb ("the Gate", founder of the Bábí Faith) claimed to be the Promised Qá'im ("the One Who rises"), and prepared people for the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh ("the Glory of God"), the Promised One of all heavenly Books. Although the Bahá'í Faith is primarily founded on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, both Messengers (Manifestations of God) may be considered founders of the Faith.

This book lifts the veil (of concealment) from the greatest "Puzzle in the Qur'án", and with the help of hundreds of verses reveals the mystery hidden for over a thousand years in this heavenly Charter. Only by examining all these verses and clues, and their interconnectedness, is it possible to truly solve this perplexing puzzle. If, before reading the entire book, you find anything objectionable in it and, as a result, decide not to continue, you will not reach the goal of your search; because patience and perseverance are necessary to solve any riddle.

This book is concerned with describing and solving the "Greatest Puzzle in the Qur'án". The mystery has been divulged through the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith. Within this puzzle is hidden the glad-tidings of "**the Greatest Announcement**" for all humanity.

Say: He is the Great News from whom you turn away.

Qur'án 38:67–68

Bahá'í
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